COMPUTER GAMES STRATEGY PLUS

IBM PC, CD ROM, Mac, Amiga

Issue 30 May 1993
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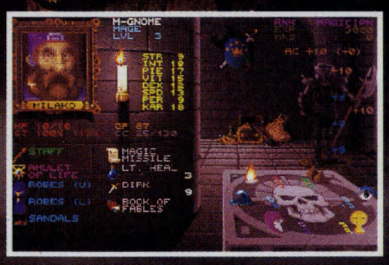

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COMPUTER GAMES STRATEGY PLUS

TAKING FUN SERIOUSLY

May 1993 Number 30

Highlights

UNIT REVIEW
UNIT DESCRIPTION
THE SCORPION ULTRABOT IS A LARGE, SLOW MOVING CARGO CARRIER. ITS PRINCIPLE USE IS THE DEPLOYMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF THE NET. THE CARGO BAY WHICH OCCUPIES THE PRIMARY HULL CAN HOLD UP TO 12 NET RELAYS. THE ON-BOARD TECH CAN PERFORM CERTAIN RELAY REPAIRS IN THE FIELD.
PHYSICAL SPECS
HEIGHT TO TAIL:22 METERS
HEIGHT MAIN HULL:14.5 METERS
WIDTH:30 METERS
LENGTH:36 METERS
STD SPEED:48 KM/HR
MAX SPEED:80 KM/HR
TURN RATE:36/SEC
CREW: 1 PILOT, 1 TECHNICIAN
ARMAMENT
PRIMARY:DUAL RAPID-FIRE CANNONS
HOMING MISSILE
DEFENSIVE:SPARKLE CLOAK
PROXIMITY MINES
ALARM BUOYS
ECM BUOYS
NEXT UNIT
EXIT

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Reality check

In our bi annual report on the CES in our last issue readers were given a taste of the upcoming games for the year. But, you may be asking yourself, what happened to all those games that were featured in the CES report of *last* year and which have yet to make an appearance? Good question, and one that I will try to answer so as to set anxious minds at rest. But first the traditional post CES Vaporware Chart.

1. **New World Order** (Machiavelli Design)
2. **Fleet Commander** (RAW)
3. **Supremacy** (Supremacy Games)
4. **Megatraveller III** (Paragon/Microprose)
5. **Daemonsgate** (Gametek)

Bubbling under: **NFL Challenge Premium Edition** (XOR)

Regular readers may note that the chart has had to be reduced to five. More and more companies it seems, are realizing the value of actually releasing advertised games. Of course, there are those awkward games that are not *quite* worthy of the above chart, and yet about which doubts must linger as to their tangibility. The games of which there is always a sneaking feeling that they might be eventually be released if only to confound speculation that they do not, in fact, exist.

Into this category falls **Strike Commander**, the self-styled 'perennial trade show favorite' from Origin Systems. The latest word on this is that it will occupy 56mb of hard disk space when (?) it is released. If this is true then the delay could not have worked more in Origin's favor had it been strategically planned. Supposing the game had come out on schedule a year and a half ago. Ask yourself: what was the standard configuration of a PC way back then? The answer was probably a 386/25 with a 100mb hard disk and 4 meg of RAM. Barely enough to run a screen saver. But now 486s are fairly commonplace, as are bigger hard drives. And in the background the Pentium (a 586 by any other name) looms.

Microsoft got away with launching Windows 3.0 in an era when 286s predominated, but it is only recently that it is become accepted by the professional software community. Now, if one complains that Windows is 'too slow', Microsoft can justifiably turn round and say: 'It's not Windows that is too slow, but your machine.' However, Origin are no Microsoft and **Strike Commander** will be no Windows. Even now the machine requirements (if true) for **Strike Commander** are stiff, but 18 months ago it would have been commercial suicide to release a game that clocked in at 56mb (not to mention RAM and CPU requirements).

Moving on, Konami's **Champions** would seem to be an ideal candidate for the chart, but the kings of the carts assure us that the game will see a spring release. Three Sixty have officially cancelled **Harpoon for Windows** (# 6 in the Sept '92 chart). The same company told me that a major upgrade for **Patriot** is now almost complete and will be sent free to registered users whether they ask for it or not. More dust has been officially bitten in the case of **Team USA Basketball** (EA), **Struggle for Guadalcanal** (RAW), and **Joe Montana Football II** (Sega), the last two were at positions 5 and 3 respectively in our September '92 chart.

SSG say that their planned World War II **Overlord** game will be revived once **Warlords II** goes out of the door, while their **Carriers at War** construction kit should be available now. EA's **Seven Cities of Gold** looked a sure chart candidate after first being revamped and then put on 'hold' after it missed the Columbus 'celebrations.' Many would describe that as a lucky break. EA's idea was to market the game as 'edutainment' to coincide with the centenary of Señor Columbus' famous 'discovery.' But then it transpired that he was politically suspect, causing The King Midas in reverse syndrome to come into full effect. The good news is that the game will be released very shortly and be expected to stand or fall on its own merits, without the aid of any spurious tie-ins.

If there's any game which readers have been looking forward to and which has unaccountably failed to appear, then don't hesitate to contact us. Our vast team of investigative journalists will be immediately despatched to cover vapor trails worldwide, as they seek to answer the perennial question: 'Is it real, or is it a memory?'❑

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Check out the *New* Air Bucks!

Due to overwhelming response to Air Bucks, Impressions are delighted to announce an upgraded version of the game, to give you, the player, the features you want!

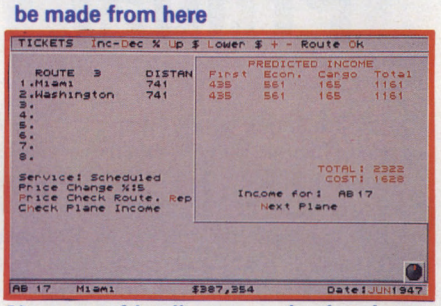
Better Graphics

256 color VGA graphics are used throughout the game

Animated Zoom Mode

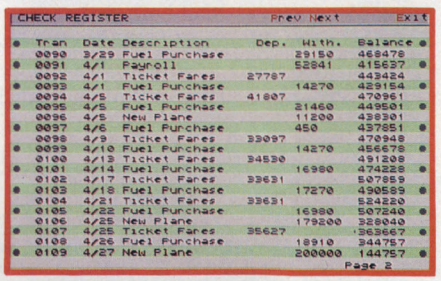
Watch your planes fly around the world; city selection & all other commands can be made from here

Better Interface



More user-friendly menu selection, better mouse & faster typing

More Reports



Detailed data on plane demand & costs is easily accessible

Among the many other enhancements made to the game are: ***Upgraded economic model & computer player AI, sound effects, personalisation of airlines, check register, better mouse & typing handling, city sizes now from 1 to 100 & vary thru time, print to paper options & lots more!***

AIR BUCKS v.1.2

available free to all registered users of Air Bucks 1.0/1.01

Impressions ***Committed to customer satisfaction in strategy entertainment!***

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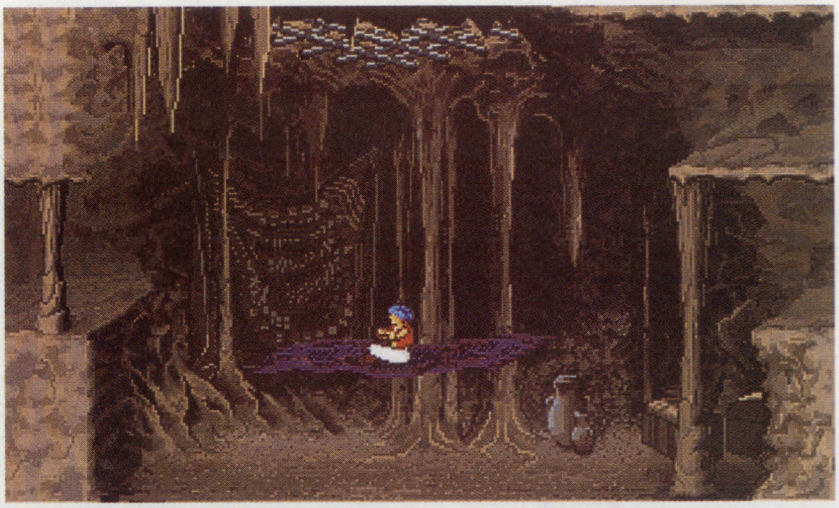

Prince of Persia II: production pooper

Someday My Prince Will Come

Enquiring minds often ask: 'Which game had the biggest negative effect on production in the feverish workaholic atmosphere of *chez Strategy Plus*?' Predictably perhaps, the answer is **Railroad Tycoon**. When this magazine was based in the UK, our writers there loved nothing more than hanging out on station platforms jotting down the numbers of passing locomotives. Mad, but harmless. However, upon the arrival of the Microprose game, work simply ground to a halt.

The runner-up for the title of Production Pooper had nothing to do with trains at all. It was about a prince. **The Prince of Persia** no less. And now, all set to do the biz again is **Prince of Persia II**, courtesy of Broderbund. Jordan Mechner who designed the original game is also in charge of the sequel. This time around, the Prince battles evils forces from outside the palace and then somewhat mysteriously, sets sail for a desert island with the Princess in tow. Perhaps not so mysterious after all. No release date has been announced as yet.

No Trumps

Just when you thought it was safe to go back in the casino along comes Trump. For days no one had heard anything of Trump Donald or ex Trump Ivana.Then suddenly out of a clear blue sky, **Trump Castles III** emerges to the astonishment of punters the world over. But the good news is: there's no sign of Trump himself. No pictures, no autographed napkins, not even news of his latest fling. All there is in the box is just a game. Amazing.

Trump Castle III contains Blackjack, Roulette, Baccarat, Slot Machines, 4 types of Poker and no trumps. Mr D T of Lexington, MA, says of the **Trump Castle** series: It's the next best thing to being in Atlantic City'. Crikey! Book your holiday now.

Somewhat surprisingly the game offers support for modems and Novell Networks and even includes a design-your-own-punter program as well as pay-out ratio charts. Available now from Capstone Software.

Interplay Trek on

Interplay have announced the signing of a new *Star Trek* licensing agreement which will mean eight more new *Star Trek* games, thus setting a new record for the house of sequels. In addition to floppy products for the PC, Interplay will also produce an enhanced CD ROM version as well as conversions for the Mac platform. President of Interplay Brian Fargo had this to say about the deal: 'This agreement allows Interplay to take a long term, strategic approach,...' etc. Neil Newman for Paramount was also on the planet Mars: 'We are tremendously pleased that the classic **Star Trek** series will...'etc. Thanks, Neil, we know what you mean. Interplay say the CD ROM version of **Star Trek: 25th Anniversary** will be available in the third quarter of this year.

Chief Gates in New Video Shock!

Sierra On-line have announced the signing of the controversial former chief of the LAPD, Daryl Gates, not as one might immediately suspect, to nab parking violators in the Sierra compound, but to act as design consultant on Sierra's **Police Quest** series.

Gates' design for the next instalment of this series puts players in the role of a LAPD detective tracking down the source of seemingly random murders and beatings. The game will also feature photo-realistic backgrounds and video captured actors, the latter being a medium in which Gates has considerable expertise.

Ken Williams, Sierra's CEO, had this to say about the appointment: 'With Chief Gates' 43 year career in the LAPD to draw from, the design of the next **Police Quest** game will no doubt be the ultimate police role-playing game.' When asked by the *Wall Street Journal* as to whether such a choice might not be a tad controversial for a game company, Williams replied: 'Controversy sells.'

For his part, ex Chief Gates commented: I want to give computer users the opportunity to see what it's like to be a cop in LA. I want to show the day to day pressures officers face and provide an accurate picture of the dangers and difficulties they encounter in trying to solve a crime. Gates' views on the pressures facing black motorists in LA and the dangers and difficulties they face, were not recorded.

WHEN TWO WORLDS WAR™

Design your own spacecraft
(or tanks, submarines, jet,...)!

Command your entire planet's military resources in an effort to conquer a hostile neighbouring planet. You control a state of the art workstation from which advanced software tools enable you to design new craft, research new technologies, build new installations & craft, set up highly sophisticated missions - and watch the progress of this strategic interplanetary conflict.

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- *Designed* as a 2 player game!

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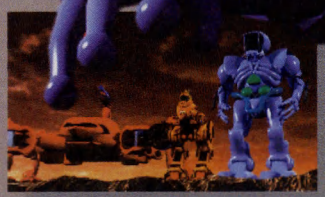

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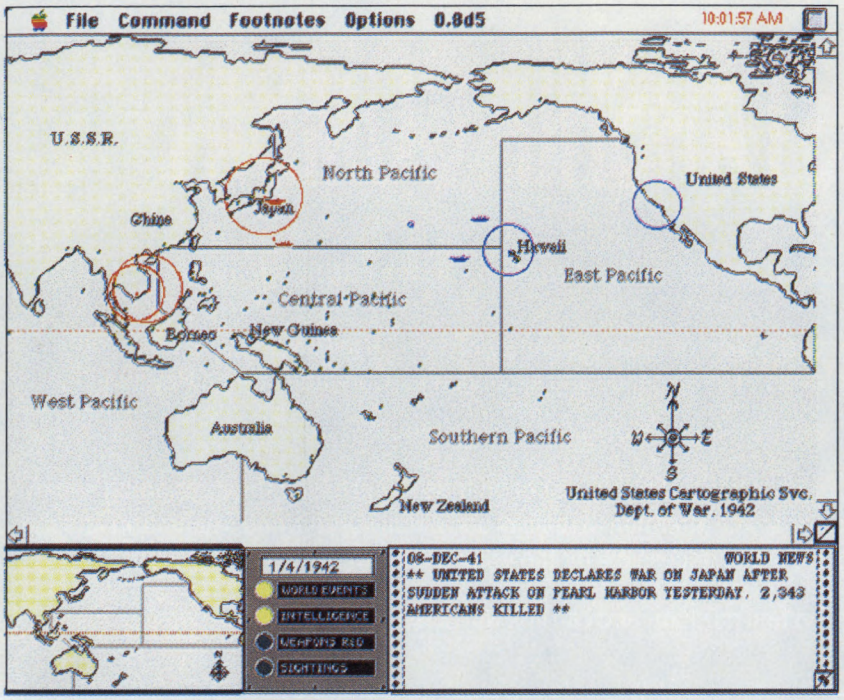


Victory at Sea: work in progress

Designer Harpoon, Too

Three Sixty Pacific announce the release of the **Harpoon Designers' Series II** for the Mac and the IBM PC. Like the first in this series it will contain 12 new scenarios for each Battleset the user owns. Three Sixty say that these will each illustrate a basic tactical or operational principle that is fundamental to contemporary naval warfare. In addition to the new scenarios, a 50 page Data Annex and the **Harpoon** Tactical Guide will also be included. The Annex provides complete data for all platforms, military bases, weapons, and sensors in the **Harpoon** series.

Three Sixty are also issuing a major revision to **Patriot** which will come on 3 disks. In addition to providing bug fixes, Three Sixty say it will offer improvements to the air support model, offer a new model for amphibious landings, and beef up the intelligence of the computer opponents. Meanwhile, back in New York, Jim Dunnigan continues to work on **Victory at Sea** which he is developing for Three Sixty.

Cineplay Interactive 1991-1993

Nice as it is to be able to welcome the arrival of a new games company, when the bells of doom toll they have to be heeded also. Unfortunately it was these bells that rang out recently to announce the death of Cineplay Interactive, the company founded by noted designer Kellyn (**Centurion**) Beck and veteran marketeer Dick Metzinger.

Although they did not release many products during their existience (perhaps the reason for their downfall?), what they did put out was always of high quality. Their **Power Politics** simulation was a fine game, while the Claymation program that Cineplay pioneered was genuinely innovative. They will be missed (especially Dick's jokes).

Vikings: little rape and pillage

Vikings PC

No, we are not about to suggest that the Vikings were politcally correct, though they did have some interesting notions about marriage. What we are saying is that **Vikings** from Realism Software is now available on the PC, after enjoying some success on the Amiga.

This is a territorial conquest game that looks to have regrettably few opportunities for rape and pillage (whatever happened to realism, eh?) Instead, there's a sophisticated looking economic model that sees the Vikings valiantly trying to balance the books in between aggravated assaults, disorderly conduct, and sailing without a licence. Look out for a full review next month.

Hallo Sailor

Dolphin Marine Systems, whose name does not immediately suggest an interest in gaming matters, nevertheless announce the release of an all new dolphin sailing simulator. This means that it is a simulation of a human sailing the boat and not one of dolphins manning the helm.

Sailing Simulator II offers four fully outfitted boats from 14 to 42 foot in length with a total of eight sails in the inventory. In fact, one could say that the game is awash with features *(but would one have the nerve? - Ed).*

Eight popular sailing areas of America are included with the basic game while a further eight voyage disks are available as add-ons. The keypad in the game mimics the controls in a real cockpit with a wheel and three winches, one to control each sail. Dolphin Marine say the simulation will give salty dogs the chance to practice 'safe sailing'. Ahoy there! Land ho! Heave to port! Whoops, man overboard. Where's that rum? *(haven't you had enough? - sub Ed).*

THE VERY BEST IN STRATEGIC STARSHIP COMBAT

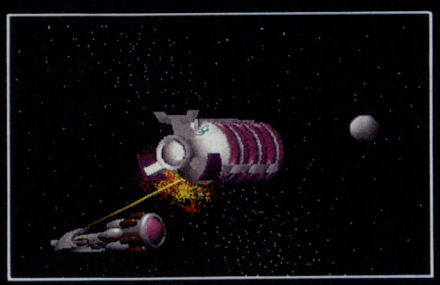
Impressions are delighted to announce an Omnitrend production - Rules of Engagement 2!

The original became an instant success -"one of the top 6 games of 1991" (Newsweek), "involving, well-planned, entertaining, highest levels of intelligence and excitement" (Computer Game Review).

Now, the sequel surpasses even the original's excellence!

Rules of Engagement 2 is a real-time, strategic space combat game. The player commands a fleet of starships engaging enemy ships in campaigns composed of multiple combat missions. The attention to realism and detail (Omnitrend's hallmark) and the sheer size of the game are phenomenal, and are made accessible by the unique easy to use control system.

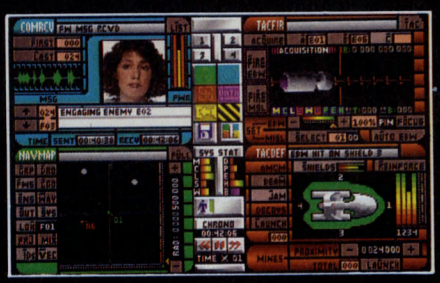
Rules of Engagement 2 is the latest Interlocking Game System module - and can link with *Breach 2* or *Breach 3* (coming this fall).



a still from an animated squence

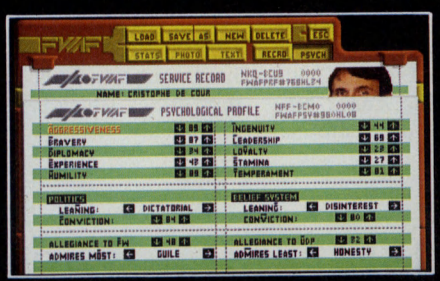
- Exciting animated sequences featuring 3D rendered spaceships relate the storyline at strategic points within campaigns. Players can create their own tree-structured campaigns with the world's first campaign-builder - and can even include their own PC Animate Plus animation files!

- *Rules of Engagement 2* features an outstanding interface. Game screens consist of four QuadPanels, color coded to distinguish different control systems. The central control bar coordinates all activity between panels. Users can select which of the 28 QuadPanels appear on the main screen - and can even save several configurations for use in different situations.



sample configuration of QuadPanels

- *Rules of Engagement 2* offers a significant advance in artificial intelligence within computer gaming. Each starship captain has a substantial dossier complete with many personality traits which affect how he, she or it reacts to orders and situations which arise.



a starship captain's dossier

outfitting a ship in dry dock

- *Rules of Engagement 2* offers immense replay value, allowing the player to design and construct both friendly and hostile spacecraft and their captains, specify the physical and mental capabilities of the enemy forces -- and design solar systems in which the battles will take place!

Committed to Excellence in Strategy Entertainment

Impressions Software, Inc. 7 Melrose Drive, Farmington, CT 06032

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RULES OF ENGAGEMENT 2

OMNITREND

INTERLOCKING GAME SYSTEM™

Impressions

Back To The Beaches

Design notes on V for Victory: Gold, Juno, Sword
by Eric Young and Keith Zabalaoui of Atomic Games

June 5, 1944. For 3 days, the Allied invasion force has been sitting at anchor in the southern harbors of England, waiting for a break in the seasonally bad Channel weather. A delay of even one more day will force the invasion to be moved back 28 days. Allied meteorologists forecast better weather on the 6th and General Eisenhower decides to attempt the Channel crossing.

French landing

Committing 152,000 men, Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) predicts 10,000 Allied dead in the initial assault. Just after midnight, 20,000 men of the British 6th, and American 82nd and 101st airborne divisions are delivered by 1200 transport aircraft and 700 gliders to targets inside Nazi-occupied France. By morning, a fleet of more than 3,400 ships, including 2,500 landing craft, are approaching the French coast. The much anticipated 'Second Front' is underway.

This is the setting for the **V for Victory: Gold, Juno, Sword** (**V4V:GJS**), the fourth installment in the series, which depicts the British and Canadian thrust toward the transportation center of Normandy located at Caen. It is also a companion piece to **V for Victory**: **Utah Beach** (**V4V:UB**). Both of these games begin at 0600 hours on June 7th and follow the campaign through July 2nd. But where **V4V:UB** deals mainly with American infantry, **V4V:GJS** pits Commonwealth infantry and armour against their German counterparts.

Tank Country

Measuring more than 20 square kilometers, Caen rivals Cherbourg in size and importance. Although the hedgerow hell experienced in V4V:UB is present in **V4V:GJS**, there is more clear terrain to the north, east and south of Caen, and in the vicinity of Tilly sur Seulles. This area historically saw many fluid armor battles.

V4V:GJS is the first V for Victory battle to feature full strength panzer divisions. In fact, the most powerful

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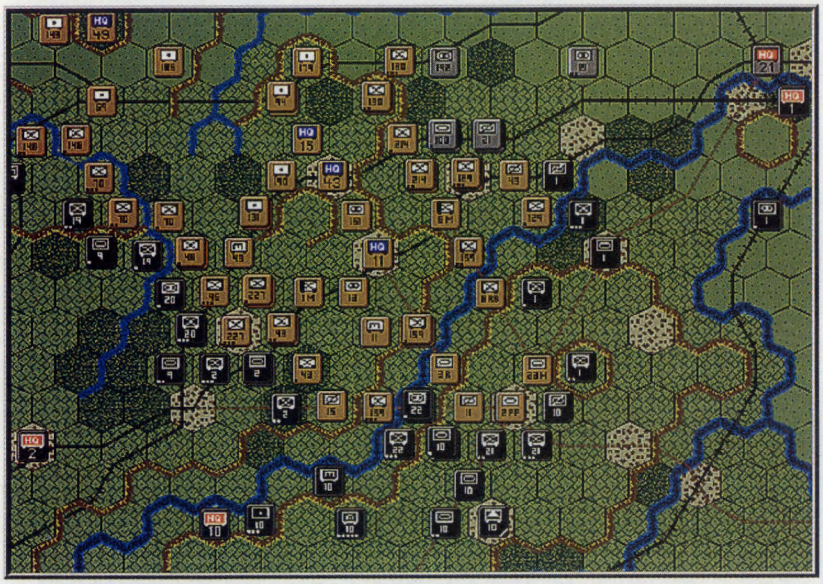

Wehrmacht division of the war, Panzer Lehr, arrives early on June 8th to bolster the Nazi positions west of Caen. Also in play are the 2nd and 21st Wehrmacht panzer divisions as well as the 1st, 2nd, 9th, 10th, and 12th SS panzer divisions with their attached support groups, including numerous *Nebelwerfer* rocket units.

To oppose this impressive lineup, the Allied player commands the British 7th and 11th Armoured Divisions and elements of the Guards Armoured Division, as well as several armored brigades. Additionally, he has more than 40 Allied naval vessels and massive Allied air support. Perhaps more importantly, the Allied player has a nearly unlimited supply of petrol and ammunition. The Axis player, however, must husband his supplies and strike selectively.

V4V:GJS also introduces to the series the Canadian Army, in the form of the untested 3rd Infantry Division supported by the 29th Armoured Brigade and several independent artillery and anti-aircraft battalions.

A Bridge Too Far - Not!

In the wee hours of D-Day, the British 6th Airborne division dropped six kilometers northeast of Caen. They were to capture the bridges spanning the Orne River and the Caen Canal, and destroy those crossing the Dives River at Troarn. The Allied player must maneuver these elite airborne units to their objectives before the Axis player has time to react. Once the Allies blow the bridges over the Dives, German reinforcements will have to travel an additional 30 kilometers to arrive at the battlefield.

Also introduced in **V4V:GJS**, are specially designed tanks, used to cut paths through Nazi mine fields and take out fortified strongpoints in Hitler's vaunted Atlantic Wall. These

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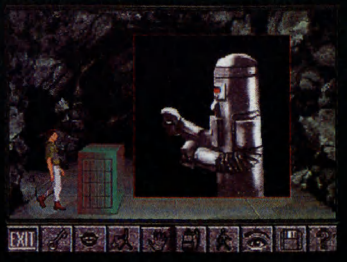

Metal monsters seek your destruction!*

vehicles are now represented in the **V for Victory** series with both armor and combat engineer modifiers.

V4V:GJS is a slug-fest of titanic proportions with victory awarded to the side that absorbs the most punishment. But there is a subtle side to the conflict, as well.

The Limited Intelligence in V4V:GJS tends to favor the Allied player due to his overwhelming air superiority. This allows him to secret his reserves behinds his lines and exploit weakness in the German defense.

The Air Support model accurately portrays the off-map interdiction of German forces. This model has been upgraded to also inflict damage on some units that are so delayed. As in **V4V:UB**, the Germans conduct night air raids on the invasion stockpiles. But the Allies have even more aircraft available in **V4V:GJS** than they did in **V4V:UB**, thus allowing them more on-map air missions. ·

Tons of buns

Supply played a major role in the success of the Allied invasion. We have, therefore, invested much time in assuring that the tonnages represented in the game are as historically accurate as possible. We have also upgraded the manner in which supply is handled internally by the program.

Another vital asset of the Allies was the devastating barrages available from the Allied naval flotilla. These ships acted as massive fire support platforms that pounded Nazi positions, interdicted their supply, delayed their reinforcements and provided close support to attacking British units. Historically, the Germans withdrew beyond the range of these lethal behemoths.

V4V:GJS allows the Allied player to command each ship in the armada, targeting specific locations for destruction. As each ship depletes its ammunition, it heads back to England for refit and resupply, only to return to station later in the game.

Bridges represented important strategic objectives in the area of Caen. As in **V for Victory: Market Garden**, we allow bridges to be captured and destroyed. The Allied and Axis players each have designs on these bridges and each have the opportunity to take them.

Also, the Artificial Opponent has been modified to operate more decisively in this deadly milieu. It handles HQ and artillery units more effectively and manages supply allocation more efficiently. In addition, the player may delegate many activities to his computer staff assistant who will gladly, allocate supply, move units and pummel the Nazis for him. Together, we hope that these elements wll serve to make **V for Victory: Gold, Juno, Sword** a memorable and challenging addition to any computer wargamer's collection.

Finally, Atomic Games would like to thank all their patrond for supporting the **V for Victory** series and invites suggestions for improvements and future WWII battles. Just post them to the Game Publisher's section of CompuServe, America On-Line, or Prodigy. Not every suggestion will be answered, but every one will be considered.❑

V for Victory: Gold, Juno, Sword *will be released for the Mac and IBM PC in June*

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Tegel's mercenaries

By John Harrington

In my younger days I used to enjoy playing arcade games, but as my reactions got slower so the shoot 'em ups got faster. Consequently, rheumy eyed thirty-somethings like myself have been relegated to the darker recesses of the arcades where they keep venerable classics like **Galaxian**. Elsewhere, the prepubescent nascent fighter pilots of tomorrow get to grips with the latest sensurround alien death machine. **Tegel's Mercenaries** offers burned out arcade freaks the opportunity to participate in futuristic firefights at a more sedate pace, although whether the sluggish response rate is deliberate or the result of poor programming is hard to say.

Set in a suitably futuristic cyberpunk milieu, the player sits in a 'spy in the sky' and issues commands to a squad of six mercenaries through a succession of increasingly difficult missions. The emphasis is firmly on killing bad guys and looting anything which doesn't move. Anyone looking for puzzle solving, character interaction and the experience of weird and enchanting societies is advised to look elsewhere.

The game consists of three elements: squad selection, squad deployment and scenario creation. The latter feature is a laudable attempt to extend the lifespan of the game and may well lead to bulletin boards featuring customised missions designed by players who, unlike me, could fathom how to load a squad into the Scenario Kit Developer.

After General Tegel has given the mission briefing, the player has to select six mercenaries from a pool of twenty. Each mercenary has unique character traits, various weapon skills and non-military talents, the usual array of numerically valued attributes such as Strength, Stealth and Loyalty plus a sackful of weapons and armour.

The trick is to match the composition of the squad with the demands of the mission. This is not usually difficult. Mission objectives consist of killing people, protecting people, destroying things, retrieving things, or any permutation of the above. Thus, explosives experts are essential for destructive missions whilst computer boffins are necessary for retrieving data disks.

It is always a good idea to take at least one medic, as the pool of mercenaries does not get replenished in the event of casualties, and once a character's armour is breached the next hit is usually fatal. Characters do develop and improve as the result of experience but there is no option to train them or purchase specific weapons for them. New equipment is accumulated via looting.

Once selected, the squad is deployed and the player commences his role as puppet master. Instructions are given to mercenaries via the mouse and pop-up menus though, thankfully, keyboard shortcuts are also provided. As hinted earlier, the interface on my 16 Mhz machine was sluggish and was no better on a 25 Mhz machine. This resulted in frustrating bouts of rapid button clicking which, if mistimed, led to menus popping up and down again before any orders could be entered.

To add to the frustration, many of the mercenaries have minds of their own and willfully disobey orders. None but the most suicidally loyal are prepared to risk certain death for a higher cause, which is fair enough, but this random element makes plotting movement extremely difficult as disobedient characters consistently get in the way of obedient ones.

About 50% of the casualties my squad suffered were self-inflicted as a result of some air-head, unable to comprehend my orders, standing in the way of the homicidal maniac with the plasma gun. Fortunately it is possible to restore saved positions and therefore reverse accidental deaths, whilst human road blocks can be by-passed by assuming total control of one mercenary, during which time the other squad members freeze like Buffalo Bills linebackers.

Dead ahead

The tactical acumen of the bad guys is not likely to tax any budding Gary Kasparovs. I usually found one bloke at the head of the squad armed with a napalm hurler was sufficient to see off most threats. Aside from injuries inflicted by friendly fire, the most common cause of fatalities is likely to be due to losing track of stragglers. For this reason I advise steering clear of deploying dead-heads and suicide jockeys unless their specific skills are desperately needed.

The overriding impression I have of this game is that of a combat system looking for a role-playing game. The missions are repetitive and shallow, and there is only mild empathy with the mercenaries to compensate for this. The interface has some good features but is irritatingly sluggish. Priced competitively and played sporadically (on a fast machine) this would be a good purchase for those fond of the occasional bout of mindless violence.❑

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PC

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Supports
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Notes
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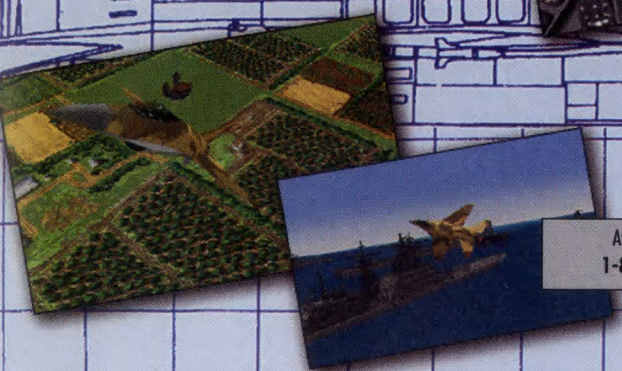

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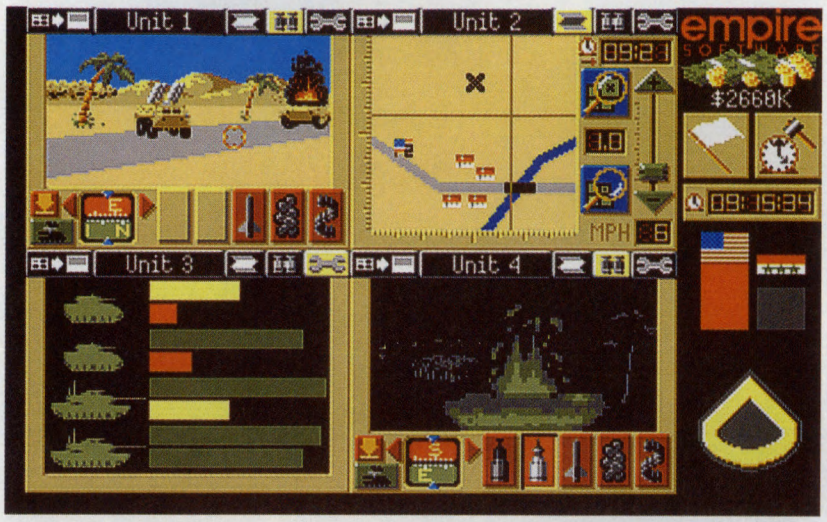
Bridging the Gulf

Design notes on Team Yankee III: War in the Gulf by David Pringle



War in the Gulf may not be the most original name given to a computer game, but it certainly sets the context for Empire's forthcoming strategy/simulation release. From the same stable as **Team Yankee** and **Pacific Islands**, this latest product is set in the cauldron of the Middle East. Although it sounds very familiar, **War in the Gulf** is not a simulation of the 1990 Gulf War (or, for that matter, the rather longer Iran-Iraq Gulf War which took up most of the 1980's).

This war in the Gulf is set a few years in the future, but has its basis in the events of 1990. Sadaam Hussein's Republican Guard have overrun into the oilfields of northern Kuwait, and occupied the two largest islands off Kuwait City. Without the umbrella of a large American-led international task force, the immediate responsibility for repulsing these troops lies with a skeleton group of American tank units. **War in the Gulf** follows the fortunes of one team of American tankers as the action unfolds.

The action of **War in the Gulf** is right down at the hands-on level of tank commander. The computer commander is in charge of the sixteen vehicles of Team Kuwait. This Team is split up into four groups of four vehicles, which the player is able to control simultaneously through a quadrant windowing system.

Tank mechanics

The battle areas are displayed in real time, the player has control over most of the important facilities of the modern fighting vehicle, and also has access to features such as mine laying and artillery bombardments. Control is achieved through a set of purpose-designed icons which make it clear that the screens are not meant to simulate the inside of a tank. **War in the Gulf** seeks to simulate the experience of the battlefield rather than the mechanics of tank driving and gunning.

The overall battle areas are split up into twenty five separate maps, and the aim of the player is to defeat the invading Iraqi forces and progressively force them back over the Iraq-Kuwait border. One of the attractions of the scenario design system is that each scenario is individually coded to very fine detail. Many war simulations use very general algorithms and procedures for determining the flow of battles. The designer need only set up a few initial starting conditions, then the code determines the course of the action. This can often lead to rather anonymous gameplay once the player has seen a very few battles. Okay, it's simple to create a infinite number of battles for the player, but what's the point if they are bored after battle number three?

In **War in the Gulf**, it was possible to introduce design elements which will shock the player, even after many hours of gameplay. After all, there is nothing more unpredictable than the human mind, and any tank commander will tell you that the one thing to expect in battle is the unexpected. (At least, that's what they told me!)

The design constraints for a product like **War in the Gulf** are not as restrictive as, say, a complete simulation of the 1990 Gulf War. In that case history provides much of the scenario, and would determine the behaviour and disposition of Iraqi forces. Still, there certainly were constraints, not least of which is the terrain itself. Clearly, any sensible simulation of a conflict set on Kuwaiti soil needs to be based on Kuwaiti geography. So, one of my primary tasks was to get an accurate picture of the territory.

My first trip was to a specialist map shop, where my request for fine-detailed maps of northern Kuwait and

southern Iraq were met with suspicion. The shop assistant looked at me from over her *pince-nez*, and said that she would have to speak to the manager. He wandered out, examined me, and told me that they didn't have anything of the detail which I required. I left feeling that I was a suspected member of the security forces.

Spies at the Bodleian

Fortunately, in Oxford we have one of the country's few 'copyright' libraries, the Bodleian Library at the University of Oxford. They seem much less suspicious of spies there (partly because so many spies went to the University, I suppose!). The staff at the geography reading room cheerfully brought me up bundles of maps from the cavernous 'stacks' under the library. Unfortunately most were annotated in Arabic, which isn't one of my languages. Still, they provided the information I required, and it was always possible to work out the relevant names by cross reference.

Armed with accurate topographical information, there was now a template on which to fit the desired action. Unfortunately, even with the high detail available, it must be admitted that the topography of the Gulf region is rather dull. It's hardly a coincidence that the M1 ARAMS tank came of age and proved itself in the Gulf War. The terrain is, in fact, an ideal one on which to pitch an M1 Abrams tank against a Soviet-built T62 or T72. That's part of the reason why the Gulf War was such an uneven contest.

On a fairly flat, fairly featureless desert landscape, there is little doubt about which tank will come off second-best. So, in order to level the playing field somewhat, and to add rather more visual interest, a few extra features were added to the landscape. The odd oasis miraculously appeared in the desert, and the occasional village grew out of nowhere. Both provide useful cover, and both helped to give my Iraqis the sort of assistance required not to make the game an animated turkey shoot.

Since the scenarios are fictional, it was possible to let the action flow in any direction I desired. A few of the battles from the Gulf War were used as the basis for a number of the scenarios, and this made the design job substantially more manageable. The torching of oilwells by retreating Iraqi forces was borrowed directly from the history book.

The initial decision to set this tank simulation in the Gulf was a hard one. We had qualms about the closeness in time of the Gulf War, where real American, British and Iraqi soldiers were killed by real missiles. That is why we decided to set our scenarios in the future, and with the ever-present Iraqi claim to the Rumaila oilfields in Northern Kuwait, that is certainly a plausible scenario.

The initial suggestion came to us from two players who enjoyed one of our previous tank simulations. They had both been American tank drivers during the Gulf War, and their enthusiasm overcame any worries which we might have felt. Hopefully, when they get their copies of **War in the Gulf** in late April, they will feel some echoes of their experiences. Then we will know that our simulation has emulated something real, and that's what simulation is all about, isn't it? ❑

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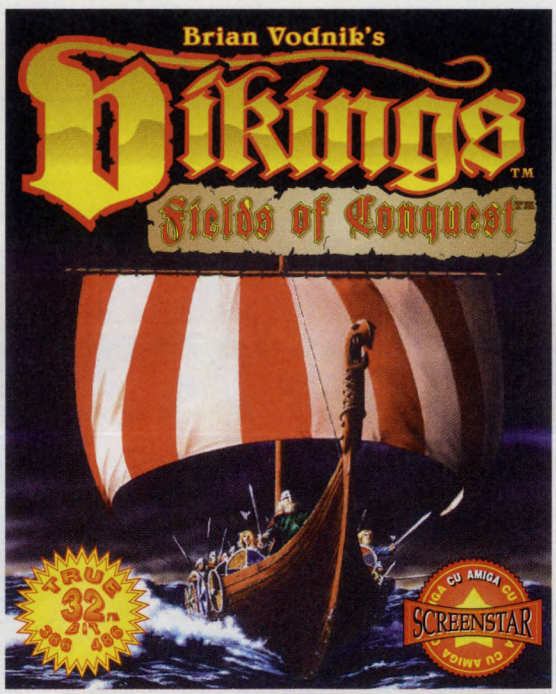

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Pirates Gold

New treasures ahoy says designer Paul Murphy

The original **Pirates!**, designed by Sid Meier and released in 1985, became an instant classic among computer gamers. **Pirates!** combined action/adventure, role-playing, strategy and simulation features to give players all the breathtaking action of a typical Errol Flynn swashbuckler movie.

In **Pirates!** players were the captain of their own ship, sailing the dangerous waters of the Spanish Main in search of fame and fortune. Remarkably open ended, the game let one decide where to travel, what to do, what alliances to make, and what treaties to break. As the adventures unfolded, treasure maps would be discovered, old family scores settled, and a governor's daughter or two would be wooed. If one were smart, brave, and fortunate, a fleet of ships would be amassed, a hoard of treasure stowed away, and perhaps even a title of nobility and the perks that went with it. **Pirates!** let players make the decisions, and showed the results of all actions.

Pirates! was, and is, a great game. But it's also an old game, and the advances in graphics and sound technology and computer horsepower over the years have made it impossible to resist updating the classic. **Pirates! Gold** will, we hope, satisfy the hunger of loyal **Pirates!** fans while attracting a new generation of computer gamers eager to escape to another time, another place.

What follows is a partial list of the improvements and enhancements planned for **Pirates! Gold.**

Pirates Sack Biloxi!

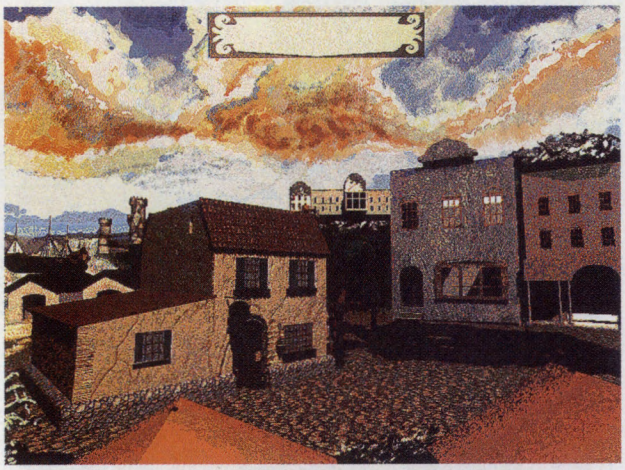
The original **Pirates!** let players sail to over 50 different cities along the Spanish Main, but the area around the Gulf of Mexico, including what would become the United States, was hardly represented. Now, Biloxi (Mississippi, that is) has been added to the game. And so have Tampico, Jalapa, Charleston, and a bunch of other cities as well. The pirate will now have good reason to voyage into the Gulf of Mexico and along the coast of Florida. In effect, the campaign area has been expanded by thirty percent.

Sea battles in **Pirates!** were based on the characteristics of real sailing vessels of that era. In **Pirates! Gold**, we've added land, shallows and shoals to sea battles. Ships can run aground, becoming immobilized, suffering sail damage and perhaps even sinking.

This adds an entirely new tactical element to the combat. In general, it's a great advantage be to seaward of the enemy: the land will cut off his easy escape, while one can flee into the open sea whenever. On the other hand, lighter-draft ships can hug the shore, braving shoals and shallows that heavier-draft ships don't dare approach.

Fencing

One of the main features of **Pirates!** was the frequent one-on-one swordfights between one's character and opposing pirates or captains. Fencing AI in **Pirates! Gold** has been altered to make it more realistic. Enemy swordsmen will follow patterns of attack and defense - a simple pattern might be thrust high, thrust medium, thrust low, parry, repeat, for example. Over the course of the battle, one can learn the opponent's pattern and take advantage of it.



At higher difficulty levels the patterns become more complex, and opponents change patterns periodically, giving less time to learn them. Of course, one can flail away at random, counting on enthusiasm and luck to overwhelm the opponent. But on average the thinking fencer will do better than the chaotic fencer.

Pirates! Gold will be available in both VGA and Super VGA format. Greater graphics power means enhanced artwork that is not just scenic, but also an integral part of the game. For example, we've replaced the old town menu with a picture of a Caribbean town. To enter a tavern, click on the tavern building. To visit the governor, click on the governor's mansion. If he doesn't want to see visitors his gates will be closed. And so forth.

These new format menus are much more intuitive than the old menu list of options. There are a number of other changes to the game, some small, some not so small. But we've worked hard to maintain the pacing, spirit and texture of the original.❑

This article is a sequel to the one which appeared in issue 21. In that article all the changes mentioned were tentative

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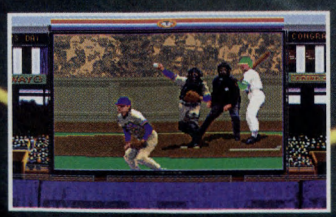

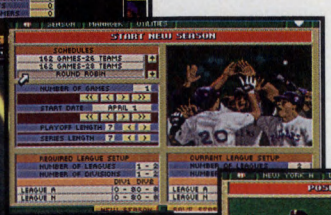

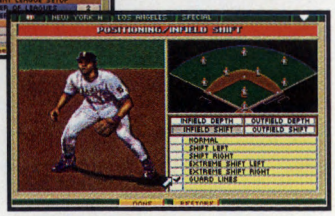

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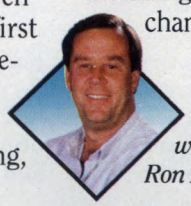

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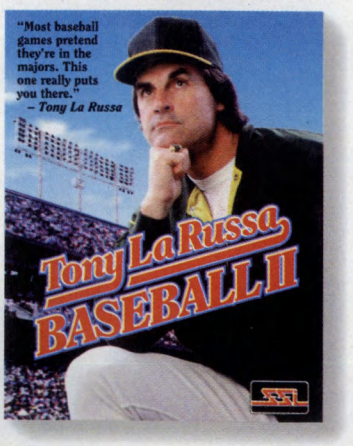

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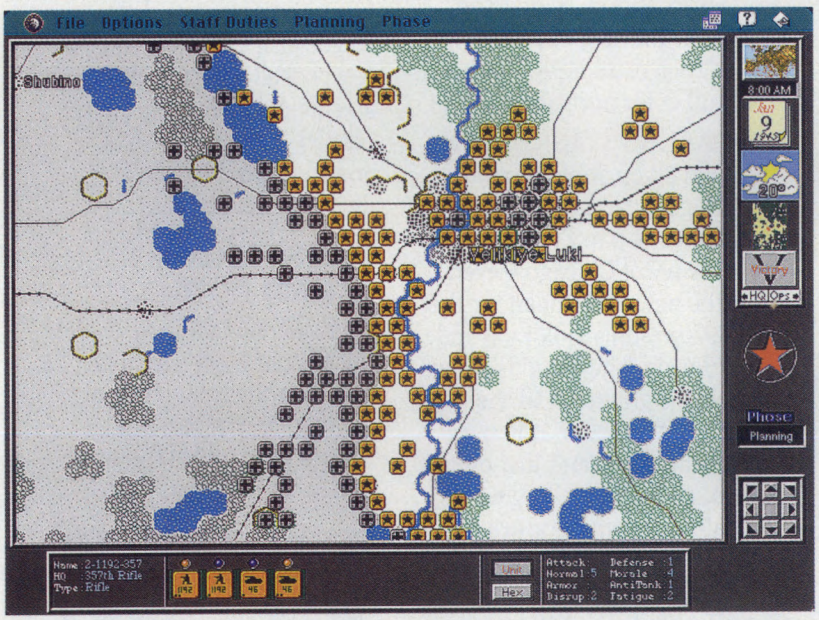
And Came the Onslaught

Marc Dultz on strategy and tactics in V for Victory: Velikiye Luki



Part II: Russian strategy

Hitler found out like Napoleon before him. The Old Guard realized it too late as did the Waffen SS: horses and horsepower froze in 1942 just as they did in 1812. Time and cold can make things stand, as well as lay, perfectly still. To appreciate the effects of weather on war, publishers Three-Sixty has gone so far as to alter the background graphics when the snow, mercury, and temperature begin to falling upon the fields of Mother Russia. Meadows fill with snow and turn a desolate white, rivers ice and turn a shivering pale blue, and lakes double as Red Army skating rinks. In effect, the board becomes a snowblinded testimony to Old Man Winter. Keep this in mind when pouring the Prestone and donning the snowshoes. Fifty years ago, millions did.

It is 15 November, 1942 when the balloon goes up on the Russian northern frontier. To the south, the German's elite 6th Army, under General von Paulus, is four days away from the Red Army's counterstroke and subsequent envelopment at Stalingrad. Velikiye Luki, on a lesser scale, is to witness much the same debacle. The world knows that Germany is the master at warfare in the warm campaigning months. Come winter, Russia has no equal.

Workers and Peasants

The sons of Mother Russia are poised at the gates of Velikiye Luki, eviction notices for the unwelcome inhabitants pinned to their bayonets. Stalin's Red Army of Worker and Peasants have fielded the 3rd Shock Army, comprising 2nd Mechanized, 5th Guards Shock and the 8th Estonian Corps, the bulk of which stand at the ready on day 1 of the northern offensive. Thus, in two bold, concurrent offensives, Stavka plans to annihilate the Wehrmacht as it stands. The dead of winter will have new meaning.

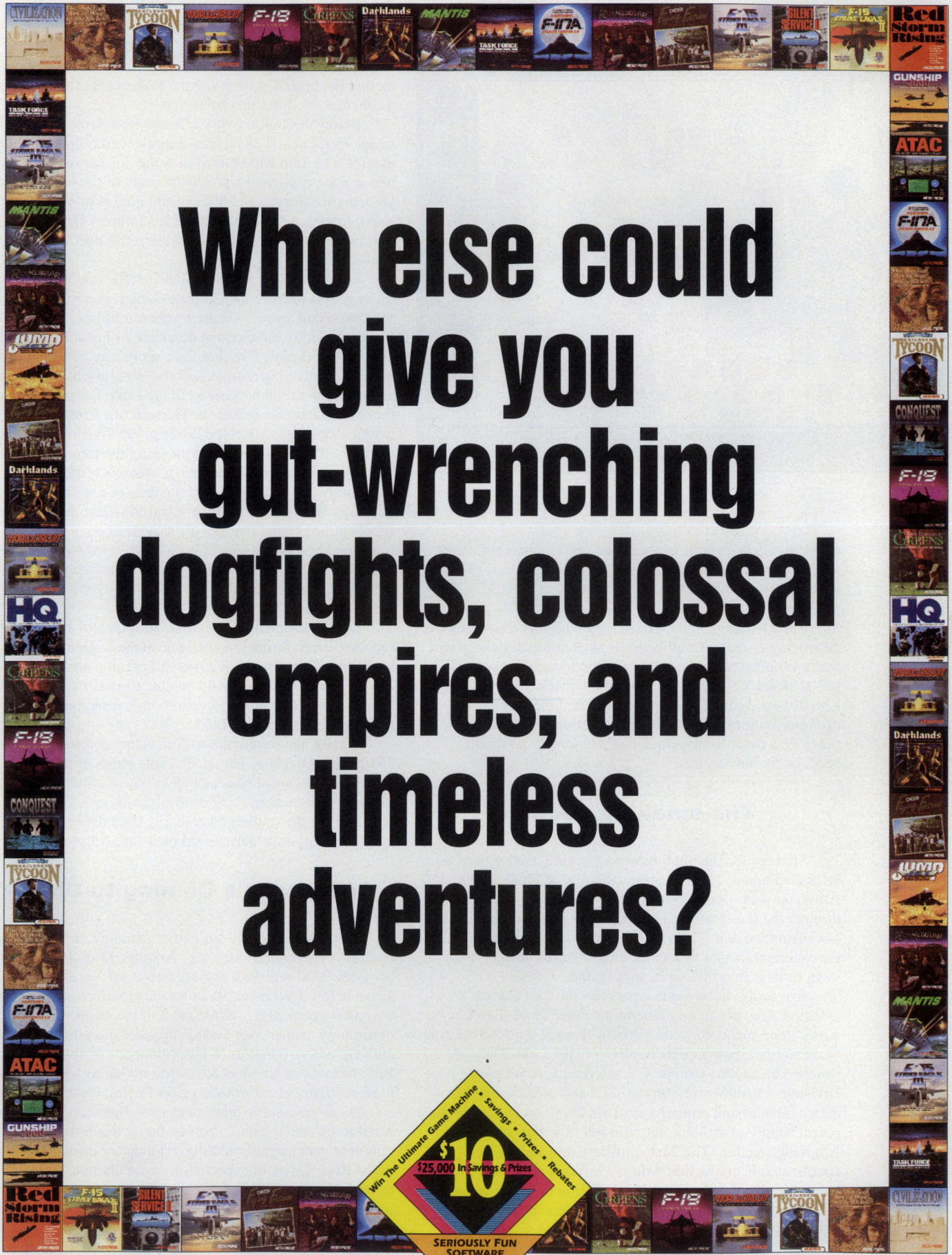
It's opposite number, *Gruppe Chevalerie* under the command of *Armeegruppe Nord,* is thinly stretched out along a north-south axis east of the citadel, with meager reserves in Velikiye Luki and Novoskolniki, proper. Gruppe Chevalerie is dug in and prepared to weather the cold Russian winter in and about Velikiye Luki. Third Shock Army doesn't share the same travel arrangements.

Hotel VL

The key to victory for the Russian 3rd Shock Army lies in overwhelming strength of numbers and maintaining a dogged pursuit of their enemy. Every category on the firepower scale is tilted in favor of the Red Army. From Sturmovik to Katyusha, T-34 tank to PPSH submachinegun, the Russian army possesses a tremendous numerical edge which must be exploited to insure victory. Guns kill, butter just clogs arteries.

Allowing the Wehrmacht the opportunity to dig in and receive reinforcements while the erstwhile Red Army methodically drops hammer blows is tantamount to disaster. The Red Army must initially be brutal in it's opening 24 hour assault, the Third Shock Army electric in action as well as in

V for Victory: Velikiye Luki
is published by Three Sixty Pacific and was reviewed in issue 28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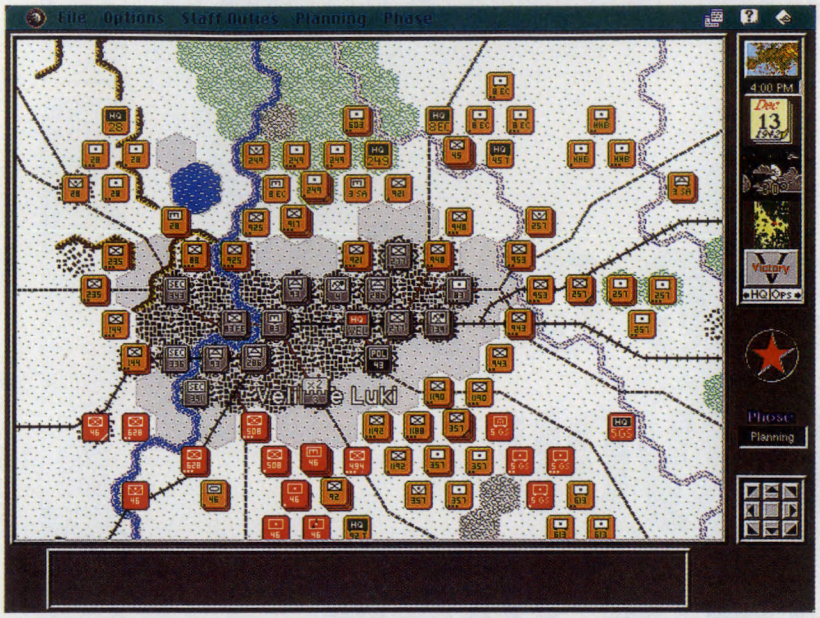


name. Artillery batteries should fire until molten red, tanks should advance until the treads come unhinged, and soldiers should charge until bayoneted. Well, fatigue level 15 will do just fine.

The assaulting units are charged with theprimary task of destroying as many frontline units as possible, for every unit that is eliminated on the field of battle lessens the occupancy rate at Hotel Velikiye Luki. The inital attack's secondary goal is to drive a wedge between the two frontline German divsions in order that follow-on formations carry the day to the town's outer limits. Once battle is joined, no-quarter need, or should be given.

The smoking section

Strategy for the inital blows addressed, tactics need now be mailed home. The northernmost units of Third Shock Army, the 44th Ski Regiment, is given the task of driving through the forest north of Velikiye Luki and outflanking the town from the rear. The villages northwest of Velikiye Luki are excellent locales to secure, their seizure cutting off the town from it's northwestern supply line.

Just south of the ski troopers lies the 21st Guards Division. One of the four elite units under Third Shock Army's command, they are initially charged with the clearing of the northeastern approaches to Velikiye Luki. They are matched up against Gruppe Chevalerie's 83rd Infantry Division, a battleworthy formation that is stretched tighter than a rubber band around a softball. The 21st maintains a potent supply of artillery batteries, all of which sit in the 'smoking' section. The 21st's artillery arm should be coordinated in conjuction with it's infantry attacks, leaving long range bombardment and interdiction to Corps batteries.

Due south of the 21st Guards are elements of the 184th Tank Brigade. These units should be held in reserve until such time they can be used in the role of exploitation. The 184th should be utilized to pass through any openings the 21st Guards manages to create. This mini-blitzkrieg should exploit the breach, preventing the Wehrmacht from reforming a coherent, well-defined battleline.

Below the 184th, two 'ordinary' Red Army rifle divisions (28th and 381st) make up the central portion of the assault. The 28th Rifle Division is the northernmost of the two and are deployed opposite the seam of the two frontline German divisions. The 28th's initial goal is to wade into this seam, forcing the Wehrmacht's 83rd Infantry Division northwest and away from the northern rail line leading into Velikiye Luki.

The 381st Rifle Division has just the opposite ambition. Their goal is to force the German *Gebirgsjager* Division southwest and away from the southern rail line. This 'superbreach' in the German defenses will enable the newly arriving 9th Guards Division the opportunity of sweeping aside the remaining remnants of the Wehrmacht's center and advancing to the suburbs of Velikiye Luki. Do not march into the town! Learn the lesson the German 6th Army is being taught at Stalingrad. Let the lesser grade divisions invest the town, the 19th is better suited pursuing the fleeing German artillery and sealing the German garrison's tomb.

Below the 381st Rifle are the men of the 257th Rifle Division. While a shade shy of Guards status, the 257th is an excellent line formation. It's primary mission is to lay havoc to the northern elements of the German's 3rd *Gebirgsjager* Division. If the 381st is unable to drive into the seam of the two German divisions, then the 257th may have to swing north and aid its comrades.

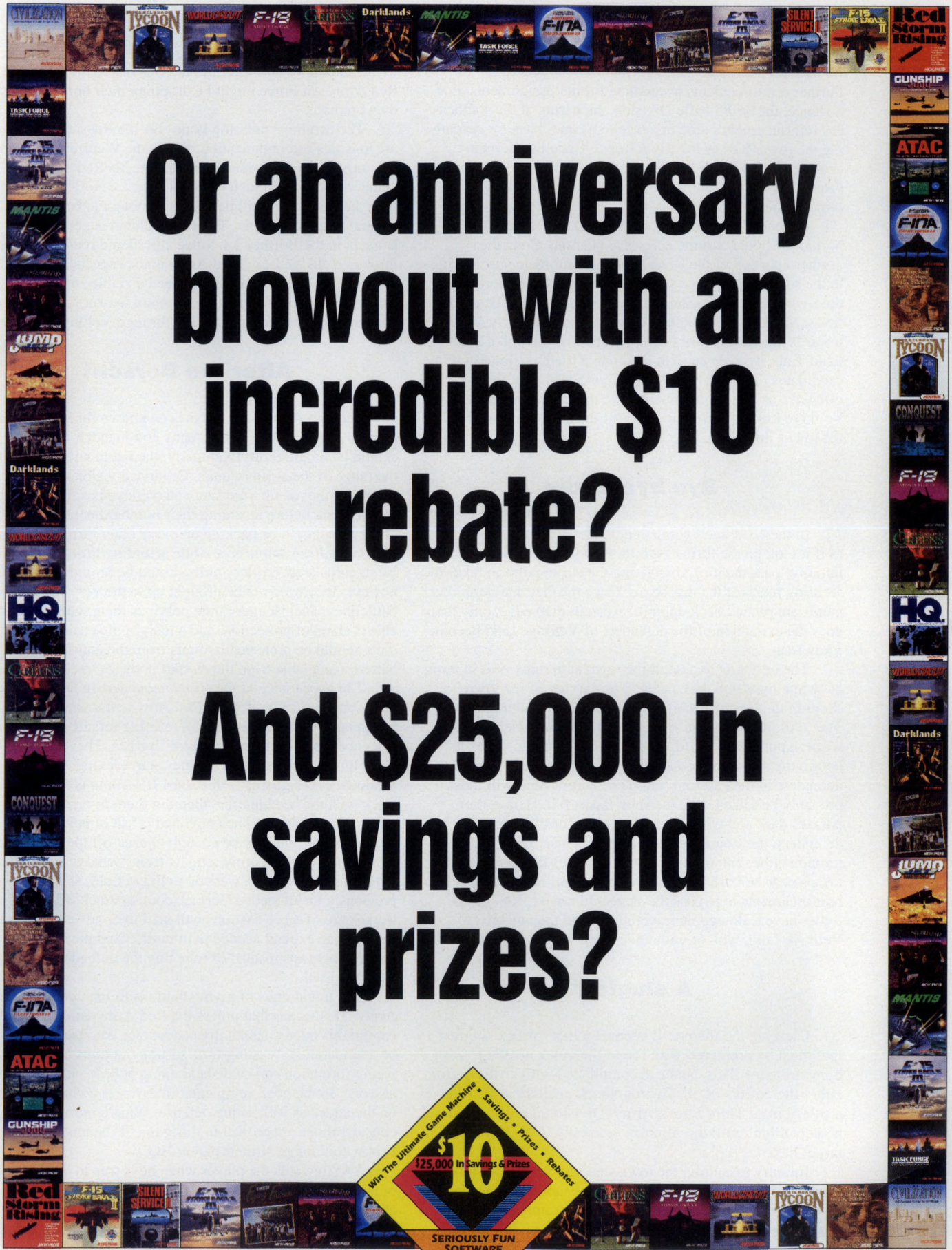
Further south are the veteran 46th Guards Division, the second Guards formation available at the beginning of hostilities. Complete with a pwerful organic artillery complement, the 46th should be able to land the death blows against the *Gebirgsjager* Division, liberating the southeastern road leading to Velikiye Luki.

Finally, the southernmost Red Army combatant is the 357th Rifle Division. The 357th lacks much of the punch that some of their compatriots can meet out and thus are best used securing the southern flank of the 46th Guards Division insuring that the southeastern supply road not become interdicted by stray German ski or *Brandenburgerunits.*

Guess who's Coming to Dinner?

As if the Red Army isn't strong enough, their drinking buddies were invited along too. Another 11 divisions, 3 tank brigades, 1 ski regiment and numerous ad hoc artillery units arrive before December 5th at various reinforcement points on the eastern map edge. While most of the reinforcements are of ordinary caliber, 9th Guards appearing on the 16th and 19th Guards arriving on 18 November are of veteran status. Both formations are ideal follow-on divisions and should be used in pursuit of enemy stragglers fleeing from the fighting.

Other units serve other purposes. The massive mechanized force arriving on 20 November at the northestern reinforcement point should dig in along the northern portion of the River Lovat in expectation of the German counterattack through the woods. Why the Germans plan on counterattacking, especially through the forests north of Velikiye Luki is anybody's guess. I'll touch upon this later. For now, dig in along the road out of harm's reach. The German armor is unable to cross the river anyways (at least until the river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freezes) so there's no sense giving them targets to fire at. Further reinforcements necessitate further assignments. For instance, the 360th Rifle Division, appearing at the southeastern reinforcement point, are excellent candidates for defending the lower half of the River Lovat. Once the German counterattack gets underway, the Red Army will need to protect the southwestern approaches to Velikiye Luki from blindside assaults.

In general, any reinforcements that arrive from the northeast should assume defensive postions along the northern portion of the River Lovat. Reinforcements arriving in the southeastern zone should defend the lower portion of the river. Centrally located reinforcements should be used to invest Velikiye Luki and/or advance along an east-west axis towards the victory-point rich town of Novoskolniki. Both 92nd Tank Brigade and 7th Estonian Rifle Division are prime candidates to advance on Novoskolniki. Think of the offensive as a giant encirclement to the north and south of Velikiye Luki followed up by a roll-up to Novoskolniki and the towns due north.

Bye bye birdie

In the last issue I compared the defense of Velikiye Luki as if it took on the form of a bird. Russian strategy should initially 'pass the bird,' bypassing the strongpoint in favor of securing much of the mapboard. Once the German reinforcements are pinned back upon the western map edge, only then does the extraction of the defenders of Velikiye Luki become a key issue.

The best way to assault the town is to think of it in terms of 'white meat and dark meat.' The carving of the town should fall along the road line that passes through the town. The 'dark meat,' if you will, refers to the defenders in the western portion of the town. This section should be taken before the snow begins to fall. The 'white meat' refers to the defenders in the eastern section of the town and will most probably be seized once the snowflakes fall. Hence, the phrases dark and white meat. Not only does this split the defenders, the Red Army will be able to use the road to pass through either end of town. This facilitates the supply of the troops near Novoskolniki as well as providing a clear path for reinforcements to bypass the siege. Otherwise, Red Army forces have a slowgoing traveling around the outskirts of Velikiye Luki, with or without snowshoes.

A slugfest

Clearing the town will become a hex for hex slugfest that must be prempted with round the clock artillery bombardment. This can be accomplished with artillery from either the coffers of 5th Guards Shock artillery or Corp level artillery from Third Shock Army. Divisional artillery should be kept silent until the infantry are ready to assault the target hexes.

Infantry assaulting the town should *always* be in attack supply, especially considering all of the modifiers the German garrison will have to negate the doubled supply benefit. Morale, bunkers, fortresses and intelligence all fall on the German side of the ledger. Sheer force falls on the Russians. Save the Sturmovik air support for other groundbusting. Due to the amount of anti-aircraft batteries inside the town, the Red Army Air Force might be dropping their bombs on their own brethren.

The two most pressing issues for the Russian commander are logistics and organization. While the Wehrmacht scrounges for *sauerbraten* and sausage, his Red Army counterpart suffers much the same fate . . . Not! Most of the time the Red Army will be fotunate enough to be in either general or attack supply. The real problem is getting the Borscht to the Bolsheviks. Since all rail and road lines lead through Velikiye Luki, Red Army units, especially those pursuing the German stragglers need a viable supply line back to the soup kitchens. All the more reason, the Red Army must secure the road line passing through Velikiye Luki.

After the Borscht

The Red Army has always been known for it's commitment to artillery. As the Red Army commander, ones aim should be no different. Eventually, the battle will roll out of the range of the artillery units. Organic divisional artillery should be moved forward first and deployed as far forward as deemed safe before resuming their bombardment role. Otherwise they'll be packing up every other turn, providing targets for *Brandenburgers* while affording little support. Next, corps level artillery units should be brought forward, however they need not be brought up to the very edge of the battlelines. Their longer range provides them with a reasonable cushion of protection, and a margin of secuirty. These units should be protected by units from the anti-aircraft batteries available from the at-start pool.

The appearance of the *Brandenburgers* in December can pose some headaches for the Red Army commander. Stacking headquarters with either dug in, refitting infantry or artillery is a good way of fending off these fireflies. They can be a nasty hinderance especially if they start picking off the headquarters of guards formations. If nothing is available to stack with the headquarters then dig them in on either village, town or forest hexes. The combined effect of being dug in on defendable terrain may be enough to swat off the commandos.

As the German army retreats from Velikiye Luki, be sure to take as many towns, west of Velikiye Luki, as possible. As previously mentioned, a German counterattack will occur and the seizure of these bastions will stall their advance. Make the German expend needed ammunition and men on these farflung outposts instead of relieving the defenders at Velikiye Luki.

The initial onus of giving battle is thrust upon the Red Army. This means that unless the Red Army commander isn't careful, his huge quanatitative advantage can itself prove to be a hinderance. Wasting time sorting out units of the same parent formation can be disheartening at best and masochistic at worst. Remember, regimental integrity is a vital component on the attack as well as the defense. What's more, supply considerations are critical in this game if the units are not kept within range of their parent HQ's.

V4V rewards the player when he is true to history unlike other games that let you scatter units of the same division across the mapboard. Practice the art of battle as well as the art of war. Constantly check stacks of units to insure that they belong to the same divisions. Waste not, want not, wanton warriors! ❑

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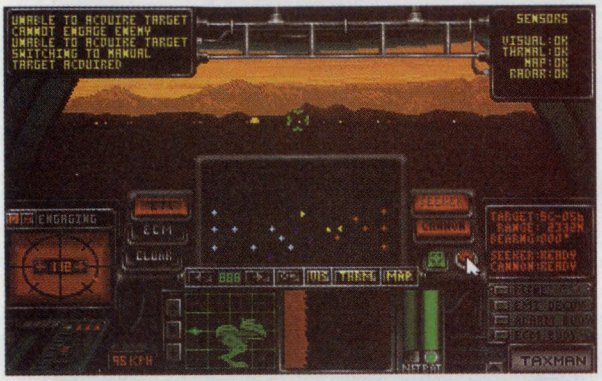
Ultrabots

By Steve Wartofsky



UNIT REVIEW
UNIT DESCRIPTION
THE SCORPION ULTRABOT IS A LARGE, SLOW MOVING CARGO CARRIER. ITS PRINCIPLE USE IS THE DEPLOYMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF THE NET. THE CARGO BAY WHICH OCCUPIES THE PRIMARY HULL CAN HOLD UP TO 12 NET RELAYS. THE ON-BOARD TECH CAN PERFORM CERTAIN RELAY REPAIRS IN THE FIELD.
PHYSICAL SPECS
HEIGHT TO TAIL:22 METERS
HEIGHT MAIN HULL:14.5 METERS
WIDTH:30 METERS
LENGTH:36 METERS
STD SPEED:48 KM/HR
MAX SPEED:80 KM/HR
TURN RATE:36i/SEC
CREW: 1 PILOT, 1 TECHNICIAN
ARMAMENT
PRIMARY: DUAL RAPID-FIRE CANNONS
HOMING MISSILE
DEFENSIVE: SPARKLE CLOAK
PROXIMITY MINES
ALARM BUOYS
ECM BUOYS
NEXT UNIT
EXIT

The games that most immediately come to mind for comparison with this new EA release (courtesy of NovaLogic) are, of course, Activision's **Mechwarrior**, (designed by the people who later became Dynamix); and **Nova 9**, the most recent efforts by the same (or a related) group of artists, intent on capturing the dynamic, tactical energy of an active warring 'bots game.

Whereas **Mechwarrior** included the trading and financial aspects of the whole 'bots cult, **Nova 9** focused much more specifically on providing a glossy representation of a host of neat solid-fill animations, combined with some difficult but carefully calculated tactical play. Both games were very much of arcade games genre despite the differences.

Given such competition, how does **Ultrabots** stack up? Not bad is the answer, it's certainly not the culmination of the genre, but it does integrate more of the range of 'bots culture into the gameplay than any previous attempt to simulate the Mech World on computer. Whether each aspect of that integration is adequate is the main subject of this review.

Net result

On the dynamic resource management front - the one most in need of further pursuit in game designers' thinking - **Ultrabots** does pretty well. While there's no trading, or upgrading of equipment, the on-the-field management of the 'bots provided in the game takes some attention to handle effectively. Resource management is controlled by two factors: the extent of the player's `energy net,' and the amount of incoming fire any particular unit happens to be taking during a scenario.

Perhaps the most interesting tactical aspect of **Ultrabots**, the net is produced by a series of energy relays extended outward from both the player's and enemy's bases. Continuity between each side's relays must be maintained in order for the net to be kept intact. As long as the net is intact, all 'bot units within the net remain supplied with energy.

Potential danger

Clearly, one of the first tactical goals of the player in any scenario then, can be to try to disable the enemy's net, by eradicating enemy relays close to the enemy base. All units in **Ultrabots** have battery back-up capabilities, however, which provide continued full functionality beyond the net, within limits. Another of the chief tactical considerations in the game is thus how to manage units so that they don't extend beyond the net limit for potentially dangerous lengths of time.

Units taking incoming fire have two options: they can attempt to hide themselves behind a range of countermeasures (visibility cloaking, electronic countermeasures, ECM decoy buoys, to name a few), or they can flee. Within their net, a certain amount of the bots' damage will be repaired while on the field, if given enough time and distance from enemy fire. Outside the Net, however, damage helps eat up battery power rapidly, and can quickly lead to an almost completely dysfunctional unit ('bots always have enough energy to amble back to base camp for repair, or to the net for a recharge).

One of the many frustrating limitations of **Ultrabots**, however, is that the 'bot maneuver control is nowhere near as granular as it should be. Each unit basically has three speeds forward and two reverse, and joystick control of both speed and rotation is rough in the extreme (in fact the joystick routine sometimes gets confused and the 'stick has to be pushed to the end of each axis to make the game playable again). The fluidity of control available in **Nova 9** is very sorely missed here. The player can learn to accomodate these limitations quickly enough, but in this day and age shouldn't have to.

Multi mechs

In terms of general 'bots maneuver simulation, however, this is one of the areas where the designers of **Ultrabots** really knew what they were doing; the game provides not only the ability to maintain fire while traveling in reverse, but does so realistically. Reverse speeds are some fraction of forward movement, but are balanced well against the opposing units' abilities to advance, thus making for interesting tactics.

While in the cockpit, the player can run everything manually, or can program the 'bot to perform a range of automated actions. The available programs include everything from Go to Position to Patrol to Engage to Shadow Friendly Units, and these programs (and a host of others) can be scrolled through quickly and then initialized to run prior to leaving the cockpit. Thus, the player can start five different mechs on coordinated or independent tasks from in the cockpit, and then automate each mech's relevant goals prior to moving into the next unit.

Outside the cockpit, there is a base camp Overview center, which gives the player a chance to check the status of any unit for damage with a single click; an option to recall any unit to base for repair; an overhead map view of the entire battle, to provide a clear understanding of the overall situation; a communications link

Designed by
John Butrovich, David Seeholzer, John Garcia

Published by
Electronic Arts

Systems
IBM PC

PC Graphics
256-color VGA

Supports
Mouse, Joystick, Keyboard, AdLib, SoundBlaster, Roland

to indicate important events as they happen; and a named listing of all units which can be used to choose and command any of the units on the field. The base is returned to from the cockpit by hitting the Escape key, and is crucial primarily for overview and repair functions (the status of repair can be monitored from this point of view).

Red alert

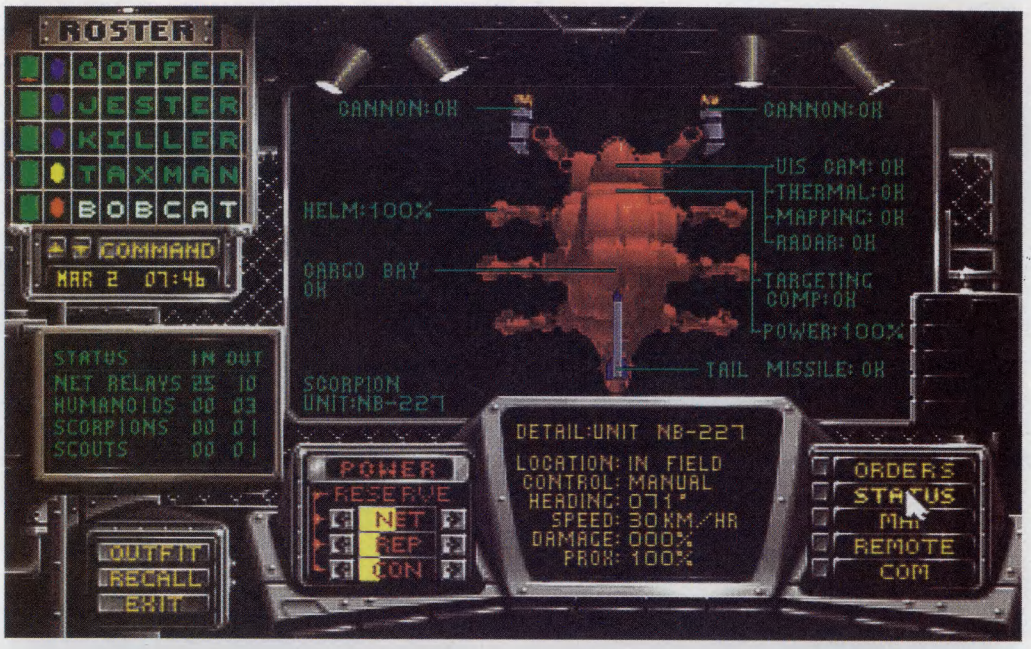
Once familiar with the energy and resource management aspects of the game, the player can easily defeat at least the first seven of the thirteen included scenarios, and this is where **Ultrabots** will come to a grinding halt for some players. Winning simply involves sending units out to scout out opponents, engaging them, returning 'bots before they get too damaged for repairs, sending 'em out again, wiping out the opposing 'bots, and then blowing up the enemy's base. With enough attention paid to all the units on the field, this takes little real effort on the player's part.

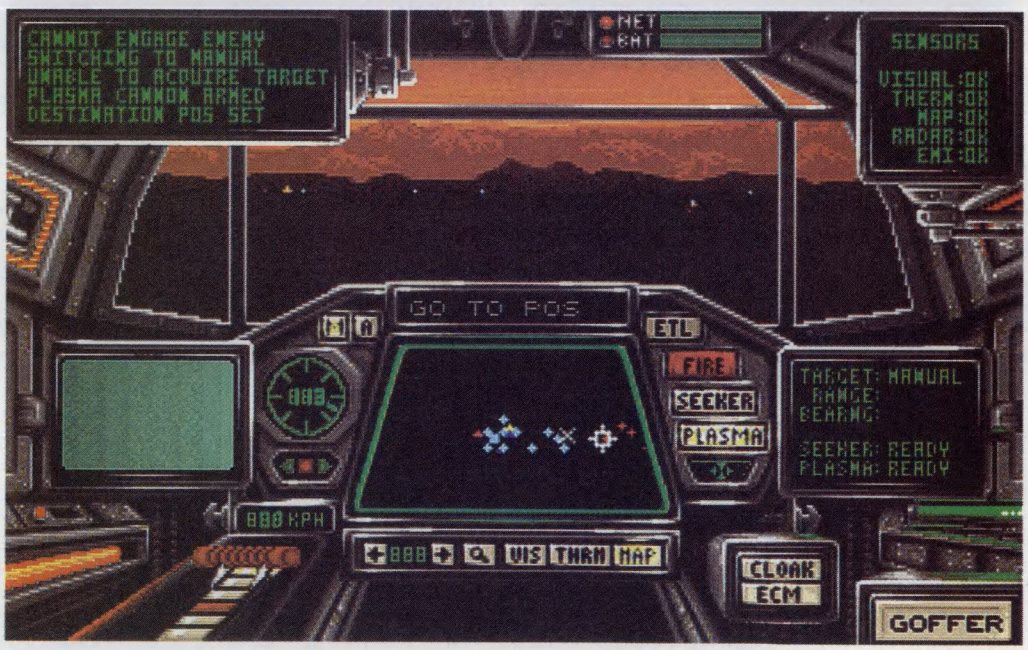
Each scenario provides a different combination of units and tactical options. Some provide both the player and computer with just a few units for a fast tactical engagement, while others provide two or three of each type of unit (more than that becomes unmanageable) for a more extensive and tactically complex challenge.

Green, yellow, red

Depending on how quickly the player moves from scenario to scenario, conditions at the start of a scenario can be green, yellow or red, with the challenge increased (and intelligence on opponent location and status decreased) with each change of condition. This is a much better idea than the one implemented in Novalogic's **Comanche: Maximum Overkill**, where failures or delay in a scenario simply leave the player with the option of doing the same thing all over again.

Finally, one of the most annoying aspects of **Ultrabots** is that the player can accidentally acquire a friendly target (marked with a red rather than green target designator in the out-the-window view), and then, if the 'bot is set on automatic, no matter what the program, the `friendly' will be engaged (and friendly fire does amazing damage rather quickly). The only way to clear this is to turn the 'bot around and scan in an area where there are no friendly targets (and preferably unfriendly ones), and *then* initialize the automated program.





Ultrabots is an interesting attempt, with a lot more potential than the initial release of the game realizes. There are aspects of the design, such as the net relay allocation and construction abilities, the opponent artificial intelligence, the detailed weapons and countermeasures options, the 'bot maneuver control which, if honed to greater perfection, might actually produce an interesting challenge.

As the game currently stands, however, play can all too quickly become tedious (especially for the heavily goal-oriented among us), and many of the resource and tactical capabilities end up being all too much like the Good Porcelain that mom and dad saved for that special day that never came (ie they are never put to use). We can only hope that Novalogic and Electronic Arts will invest further time in the design to make the **Ultrabots** system a real game.❑

V for Victory: Market Garden

By Peter Szymonik

Designed by
Eric Young, Ed Rains, Keith Zabalaoui, Larry Merkel

Published by
Three-Sixty Pacific

Systems
PC, Mac

PC Graphics
SVGA only

Notes:
Includes **V for Victory** version 3.0 upgrade files. Modem and Network play to be added in late March via an update disk sent free of charge to registered owners

Welcome to **Market Garden**, the third in the series of wargames being released by Three-Sixty Pacific using the award-winning **V for Victory** engine. Market Garden was the most daring Allied action of the Second World War. Under intense political pressure to beat the Soviets to the German heartland, and to capture German V-2 rocket sites in the Low Countries, tens of thousands of American, British, and Polish paratroopers were dropped almost 100 kilometers behind German lines in an attempt to seize as many bridges as possible across three major rivers.

The goal was to create a bridgehead on the German side of the Rhine River. From this bridgehead, the British 30 Corps under Gen. Montgomery could breakout into the heart of Germany and end the war before Christmas.

There are seven different scenarios in **Market Garden**, including a massive campaign game covering the entire operation. The campaign game is conservatively estimated to take 60 hours to finish, but the shorter scenarios can easily be completed in about 2-3 hours.

The scenarios

Most scenarios start 17 Sept 1944 and run through 28 Sept 1944. Each hex represents one square kilometer and each game turn represents four hours of real time. The map runs from the Albert Canal in Belgium to the city of Arnhem in the Netherlands and is huge; running about 2 full screens wide by some 5-6 screens vertical.

Be prepared for a lot of scrolling, but fortunately one screen usually covers all the action going on in one particular airborne drop zone.

Unlike **Velikiye Luki**, the terrain in **Market Garden** is extremely varied and favors the defense. Although very flat, large areas are 'polder,' a wet and very soft farmland, often reclaimed from the sea using dikes. Rivers run everywhere and make things slow going for armored vehicles which can only cross at a few sparse (and heavily defended) bridges.

Allies advance

Forests and scores of villages and cities dot the land. To make matters worse, most of the Germans are fortified and dug in, some occupy impenetrable bunkers. One look at the map and its easy to see why it was so difficult for the Allies to advance with any speed in the face of stubborn German resistance.

Bridges are extremely important in the game. **Market Garden** features two types of bridges, infantry bridges and tank bridges. Anyone who has seen the movie *A Bridge Too Far* may recall the sergeant shouting 'Shit!' as the Germans blow a bridge his troops were about to capture. Another outstanding feature of the operation was the extraordinary bravery of the British 1st Airborne Division at Arnhem.

Market Garden recreates this same feeling. This game is a race against time and it demands that the Allies take chances if the paratroopers are to succeed in their mission.

The game features over 500 military units, including American, British, German, and Polish forces. There are nine major types of units, and these are broken down further into more than 60 different sub-types! There are nine different types of combat, from probes to all-out assaults, and 8 different types of offensive and defensive artillery missions can be plotted.

Although this sounds like an enormous amount of detail, the game is still a joy to play because of Three-Sixty's trademarked 'staff assistant.' This feature allows the player to concentrate on a particular area, while the computer determines orders for any units the player may have missed.

The unit data window has been changed from previous games in the series. On the left hand side of the windows is the unit's name, followed by unit type and it's headquarters attachment. Between the type and headquarters designation is a colored bar showing the unit's level of

supply (Attack, General, Defensive, Minimal, None) and its supply state (In Supply, Out 1, Out 2, Out 3, and Out 4.) Also new is a letter 'R' in the upper left hand corner designating that the unit's movement is restricted due to the fact that it's part of a garrison or is fixed in place.

Allied or German

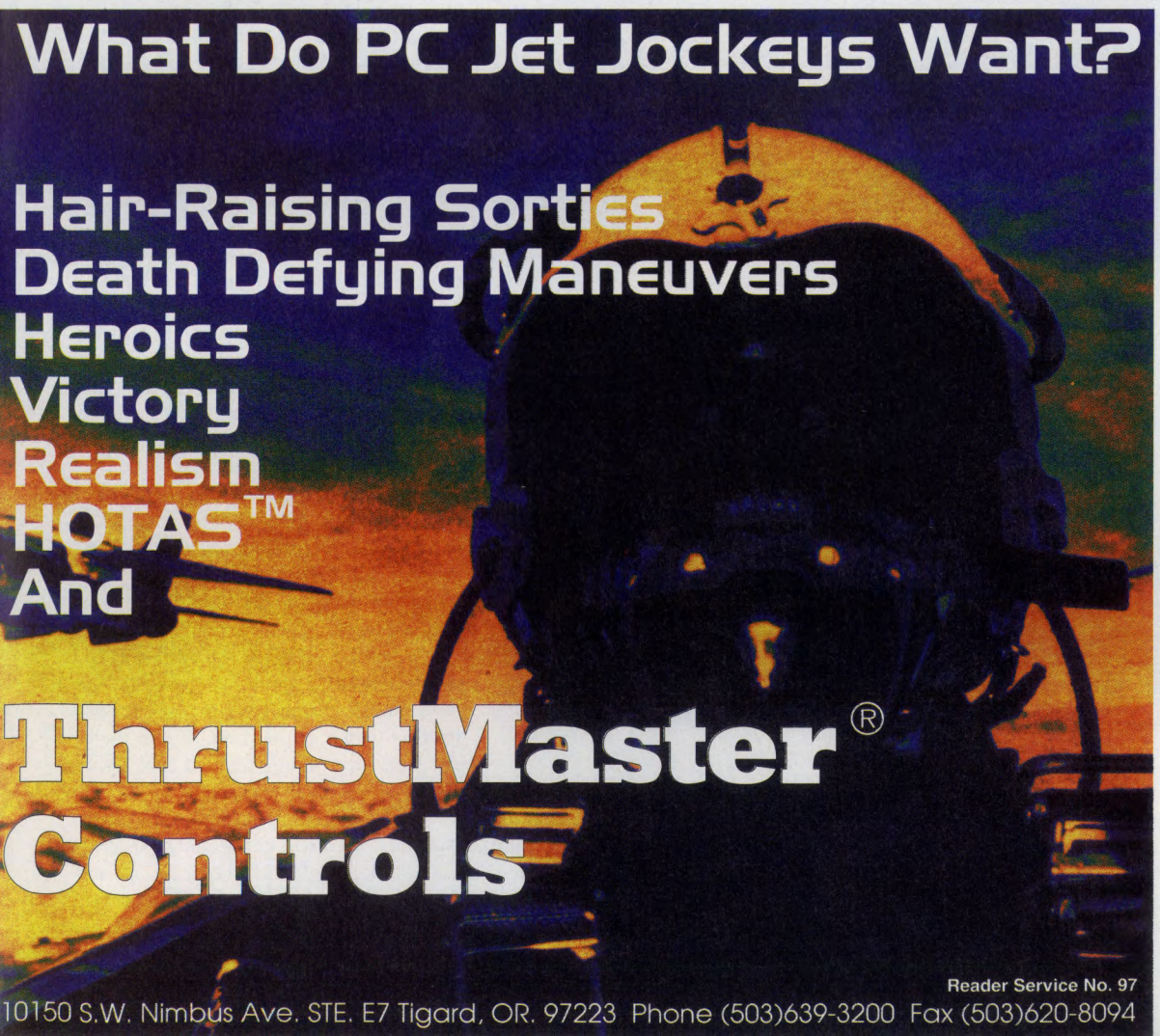
Players can assume either the Allied or German command, and they can play against the computer, or another human player. For the first time in the **V for Victory** series, modem and network play is scheduled to be added to both the PC and MAC versions of the game by the time you read this. These options will be available on an upgrade disk Three-Sixty will ship out to registered users free of charge sometime in late March.

The AI is much tougher than the one found in the original release of **Utah Beach**. But modem and network play adds a whole new dimension to the game series. Players can now take on an unpredictable and faceless human opponent as well as a tough and determined computer foe. Modem play was one of the most asked for features for future **V for Victory** games and Three-Sixty heeded the call.

Velikiye Luki is a classic Eastern Front slugfest where the Germans and Soviets hammer each other for territorial gain. **Market Garden** is something different. The game is extremely challenging, whether the player opts to play the Allies or the Germans. This is not a game where either side lacks resources, its a game that is based to a large degree on the player's strategic and tactical abilities, as well as a dose of luck.

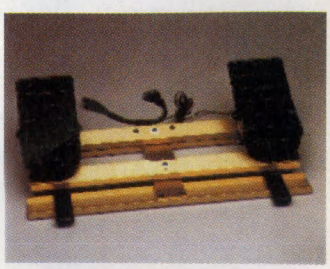
There are a few minor problems with the game. Scrolling speed was a bit slow on my Mac IIsi, but not unbearable. The game has full sound and music, including a nice musical rendition played on bagpipes! But the sound is choppy at times, especially during disk access. Three-Sixty also reports that the game's music and sound may not work on some black and white Mac monitors. For these systems, **Market Garden** will detect the problem and automatically disable the sound.

Market Garden is an extremely addictive and well-designed computer wargame, easily the best of the **V for Victory** series so far. If **Three-Sixty** continues to release V for Victory games at the current pace, computer wargamers should be able to enjoy at least two new games by year's end. Atomic Games, the developer of this series is also reported to be modifying the **V for Victory** game system for use in a new line of Civil War games. This wargamer can't wait! ❑



FCS™ (Joystick)

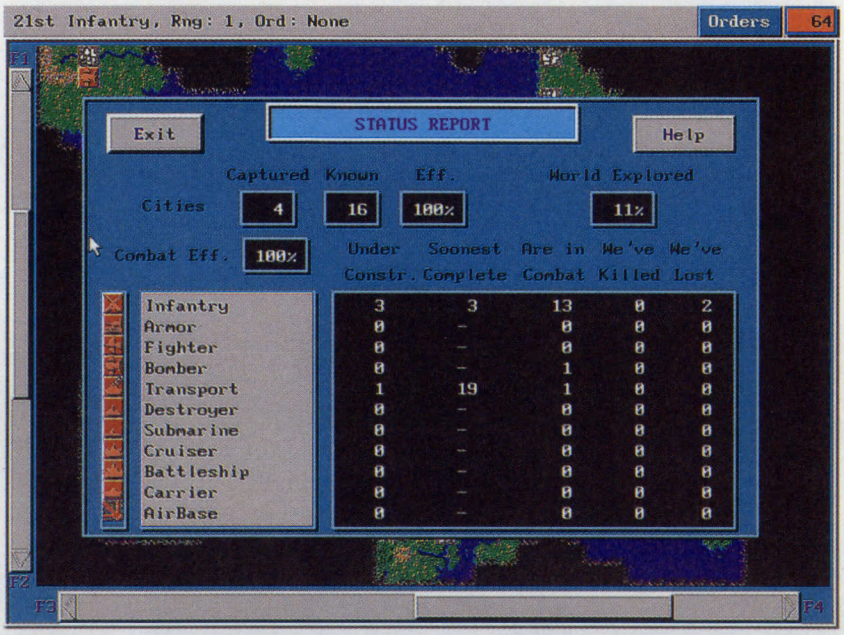
WCS™ (Throttle)
Used in conjunction with your joystick



RCS™ (Rudder Pedals)

Empire Deluxe

By Marc Dultz


21st Infantry, Rng: 1, Ord: None
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64
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STATUS REPORT
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Combat Eff. 100%
Under Constr. Soonest Complete Are in Combat We've Killed We've Lost
Infantry 3 3 13 0 2
Armor 0 - 0 0 0
Fighter 0 - 0 0 0
Bomber 0 - 1 0 0
Transport 1 19 1 0 0
Destroyer 0 - 0 0 0
Submarine 0 - 0 0 0
Cruiser 0 - 0 0 0
Battleship 0 - 0 0 0
Carrier 0 - 0 0 0
AirBase 0 - 0 0 0

Designed by
Mark Baldwin and Bob Rakosky

Published by
New World Computing

Systems
IBM PC

Graphics
EGA, VGA, SVGA

Sound
IBM speaker, Ad Lib music card, Ad Lib Gold, Big Mouth, Covox Sound Master 1, Covox Speech Thing, Covox Voice Master/ Sound Master II, Disney Sound Source, Echo II, Lantastic Voice Adaptor, Mediamaster, Soundblaster, Soundblaster Pro, Pro Audio Spectrum 16, Tandy SL/TL, Tandy TX/EX/HX/SX and Pc Jr, Roland MT-32 or LAPC-1

Supports
Mouse, keyboard, modem (300, 1200, 2400, 4800, 9600, 19200); COM 1 - COM 4.

Players
1-6 (via modem or same sitting

Comparisons in this industry have always bothered me. Specific features that help to sell product A might sink product B. What was state of the art in 1978 might merely be a state of mind in 1993. Graphics might play an important role in product C while taking a back seat in product D. To compare New World Computing's **Empire Deluxe** (**ED**) to Interstel's original **Empire** is, then, no less problematic. Call it a taste test of apples to oranges, a preference of night over day, or black to white, what worked for one product might be reason for the scrapheap in another.

The Mother Lode

The mother of all strategic conquest games has got more than a facelift in it's 1993 reincarnation. Video support runs an impressive gammit from 16 color EGA, to 256 color SVGA monitors, the latter cramming the most scenery onto the CRT canvas. Further, various screen pixel resolutions can be accessed if one so desires. Vistas are scoped in 5 zoom magnifications from world overview to sectioned battle maps. Graphically speaking, the game is functionally attractive yet subject to minor criticism.

The world maps are handsomely laid out, however some of the island maps are difficult to distinguish if they are sea-locked or not. I had to access the highest magnification map on many occassion to unlock the real estate question. Seaborne unit icons share much the same fate, as they are difficult to distinguish from one another in anything but level 1 magnification. Fortunately, unit identification is just a cursor and mouse click away.

Sound enough

Soundboard support has also entered the gay '90s. The aural spectrum encompasses Adlib, SoundBlasters, and Pro Audio boards, the basis for much of today's sound standards. Units engaged in combat produce distinctive battlefield noise, ranging from machinegun fire for ground combat to battery fire for capital ships. Units cued for movement also have distinctive scores, each type of unit with it's own rendition. One drawback was the subway-like sound emitted during non-combat movement. Clanking armor, or marching boots might have been more appropriate.

A good deal of on-line help is available via tutorial scenarios and help files built into the game. Question about connecting over a phone line? It's in there. Answers to solving the national debt? Well, maybe in the sequel...

Modem support has now been added. Not only are direct connections possible, but so too are full modem connections and local area networks (LANs). ED supports baud rates from 300 up to, and including,

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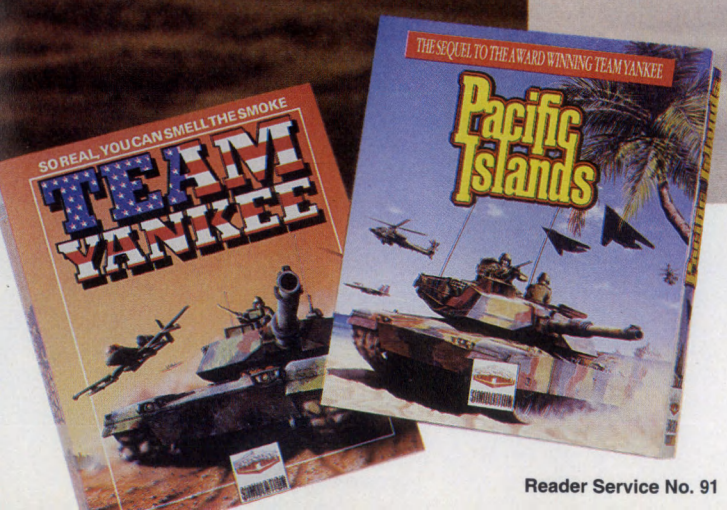

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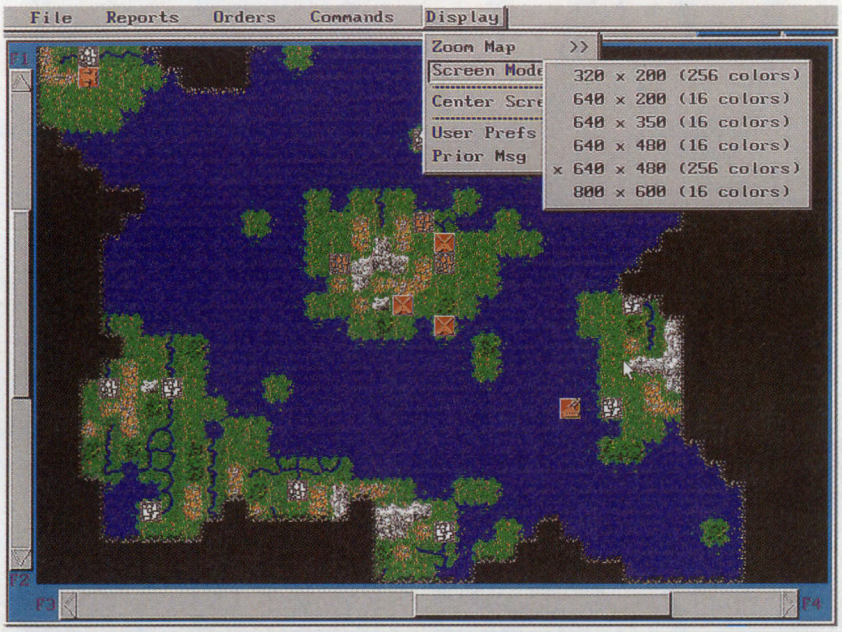

19200, although the designers claim speeds higher than 2400 can degrade performance.

Connections can take the form of auto-connects (similar to **Command HQ**) or manual connects whereby a 'pre-chat' terminal program is available before the game gets underway (similar to **The Perfect General**). World conquerors get the best of all worlds from this modem package considering the breadth of connections available. Once connected, further messaging to opponents can be sent and received although everyone can them. Hang out the 'No Privacy' sign here.

The game itself comes in several flavors. The Basic game introduces players to the basic unit types of armies, transports, destroyers, cruisers, and battleships all of which are visible to every player. The game's turn based system of 'you move, I move' is put forth on a map in full view and no bigger than 50x50 squares.

The basic tenets of combat are laid bare. In effect, one moves into the enemies space then they duke it out. Results are random, so be prepared to witness unusual Spartan stands. Damage due to combat can be repaired as in **Command HQ** by withdrawing to a friendly city and waiting till it's strength is repaired. Equally commonplace is the standardfare 'capture the city/produce the soldier' syndrome. Once captured, units are produced on varying schedules dependent upon the unit selected. For instance, armies take 6 turns to complete while destroyers take

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24. Opponents can come in any human/computer controlled combination of up to six opponents.

The Standard game includes all of the Basic game rules plus it allows for scalable maps that can feature a wrap around effect where no one can curl up into a safe corner, since there are no corners. What's more, the Standard game introduces players to explore unknown territory. As units move into these voids, they slowly illuminate what was once unknown. The twist here is that whatever is explored does not shed light on what opponents see and vica versa . The more land traversed, the more one knows.

Three new units are incorporated into the unit mix; fighters, submarines, and carriers. Finally, the sighting rules are modified to include 'ghosts.' Units may or may not see beyond their immediate visual range thus introducing even more uncertainty as to what lays out yonder.

Further refinements come in the form of production lines. Cities that produce the same unit each cycle receive shortened time frames to complete their units. This benefit comes in the form of a 1/6th reduction in the time it takes to complete a unit. Said armies can now take 5 turns to build, said destroyer, 20.

Lastly, the Advanced game. Map terrain now comes in typical fashion; clear, rough, river, forest and mountains each with their inherent features. New units include infantry, armor, and bombers again with their own attributes. Airbases are now available by transforming a land unit into a runway.

Combat now involves terrain modifiers, cities can specialize in unit production, and unit to city support ratios are thrown in. Despite all of the above, combat is irritatingly simplistic. Scenarios are abundant as well, ranging from fantasy worlds to variants of World War II.

History repeats itself

Much like QQP's **The Perfect General**, **ED** features a player history profile. Players start their careers as ensigns or 2nd lieutenants and move up the promotional ladder based upon victories over only human opponents. The player history outlines the number of worlds one's battled over, as well as the amount of games won, lost, and resigned from.

Even more intriguing, though, is the fact that every human player with whom one comes in contact is updated in the data banks. If, for instance, Bazooka Joe is one's first human opponent, then his player history can be shown as well. Makes for interesting reading once the battle and phone bills are things of the past.

Simple warpaint

As with most 'conquer the world' games, **ED** comes complete with it's own scenario and map editor. World building is exceptionally easy; pick a terrain or unit type from the pallette and paint. Warpaint was never made so simple to apply. Scenarios are designed in minutes, but take hours to conquer.

As strategy/conquest games go, **ED** has taken the very best elements of each of the aforementioned games and mixed in a few goodies to boot. Gameplay is intuitive because **ED** borrows many tried and true facets of other games and has tweaked them to give it the right feel. Groundbreaking, no, enjoyable, yes.❑

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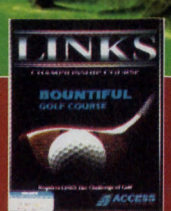

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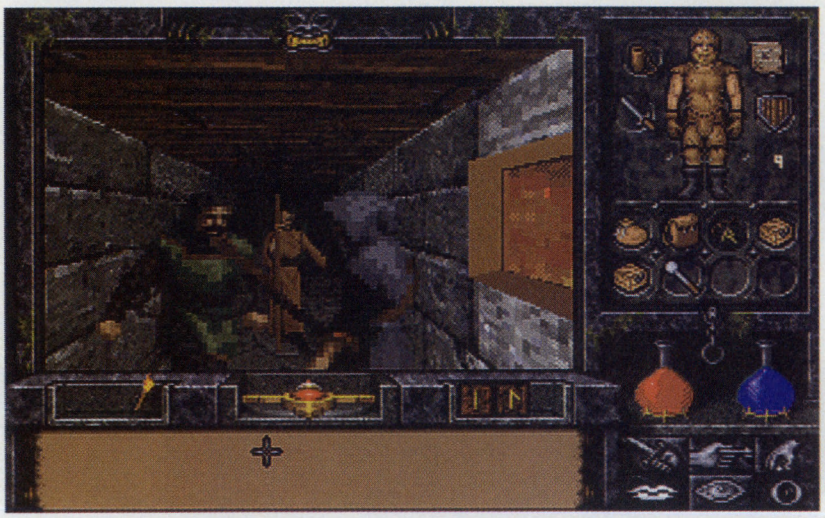

Underworld 2: Labyrinth of Worlds

MaMa has just finished a grand tour of the Underworld, all gussied up in the trappings of a female Paladin. After many trials and various serpentine trails, I greet you as a Level 16 Avatar, weary but happy and still on the prowl. My armor consists of a leather helmet of missile resist, excellent gauntlets of great protection, excellent plate leggings of great protection, darling little chain mail booties of some kind of protection, and a stunning vest of flameproof. I have an excellent plate vest of unsurpassed protection in my backpack (for evening wear, of course).

My weaponry includes a cross-bow of unsurpassed accuracy acquired in the anteroom of Praecor Loth's resting place, an axe of firedoom from the vault in the Mage Test, an excellent longsword of unsurpassed accuracy, an excellent longsword of unsurpassed damage, and an excellent cudgel of open. Fancy swords can be found in the headless's room on level two of Killorn Keep and hiding in the flowers in the swampy abode of the castle Reaper. The cudgel is hidden in a secret room in the NW corner of level one of the Pits of Carnage.

I also carry a rock hammer for the occasional boulder dashing. There is an abundant supply of hammers in the Armory and one in a backpack located very close to the entrance of the Ice World. The key to the armory is very well hidden in a pile of debris in a pit in the Castle Reaper's swamp, not far from the planted sword.

The castle

As the plot and geography of the Underworld are revealed, several events must occur in sequence to trigger new sections of the game. In order to assure progress, the Avatar must check in at the castle after each sortie into other worlds or after significant events in the castle.

Checking in involves speaking to Miranda and Nystul every time. Nanna should receive attention each visit until she tells about her temptations and her concerns for her fellow workers. Everyone at the castle has something of value to say except the guards, and even they are chattily pleasant.

After completion of the fourth world, Taloris, the Avatar should inquire as to the status of the Guardian's ties each time Miranda is questioned. This is essential to trigger the end game after the eighth world is conquered.

There are many goodies and several puzzles in the castle and sewers, but the game really begins once the Avatar reaches level five where a miniature blackrock gem like the one surrounding the castle, is located on an island.

Level three

To reach level five requires some really fancy footwork on level three of the sewers. There is a moving floor section that must be navigated in order to reach a switch and porticulli. Once that gate is opened, exploration leads to a 'rabbit hole' which leads to levels four and five. There is a shortcut back to the castle from level five, located directly south of the gem island.

The gem has eight facets, each of which is a gateway to an alternate world. Each world hides a chunk of blackrock gem and a location where the Guardian is most powerful. Endgame can only be reached if each of the eight gem pieces has been found, returned to Nystal for treatment and then 'used' on the island gem.

In addition to this series of quests, the Avatar must sever the Guardian's powerholds in each of the worlds by using Altara's staff. The staff is acquired from Altara in the Killorn Keep after the Avatar has taken the jeweled dagger she offers to level four of the castle, equipped it, and searched the far southeast corner for a listener Imp. The Imp hides in a lava falls area, beyond a water area and can only be found if the Avatar is armed with the correct dagger.

Otherworld

In the Goblin Tower, the gem is held by the Captain, Borne, and the correct place to use the staff is in Bishop's cell. Two pairs of special gauntlets are needed to free Bishop.

In the Ice World, the gem is located on a tiny patch of land on a very large and slippery icefield. Extreme caution is required to reach it without falling over the edge of the icefalls. The instruc-

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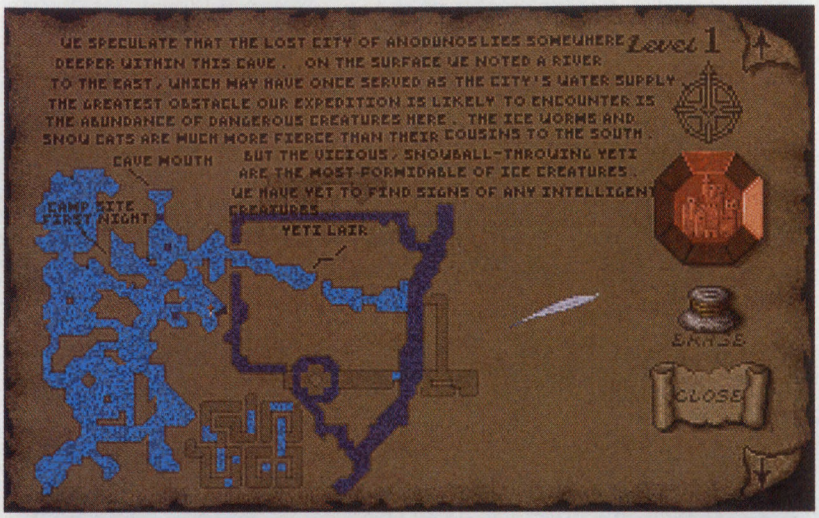
WE SPECULATE THAT THE LOST CITY OF ANODUNOS LIES SOMEWHERE DEEPER WITHIN THIS CAVE. ON THE SURFACE WE NOTED A RIVER TO THE EAST, WHICH MAY HAVE ONCE SERVED AS THE CITY'S WATER SUPPLY. THE GREATEST OBSTACLE OUR EXPEDITION IS LIKELY TO ENCOUNTER IS THE ABUNDANCE OF DANGEROUS CREATURES HERE. THE ICE WORMS AND SNOW CATS ARE MUCH MORE FIERCE THAN THEIR COUSINS TO THE SOUTH. BUT THE VICIOUS, SNOWBALL-THROWING YETI ARE THE MOST FORMIDABLE OF ICE CREATURES. WE HAVE YET TO FIND SIGNS OF ANY INTELLIGENT CREATURES.
Level 1
CAVE MOUTH
CAMP SITE FIRST NIGHT
YETI LAIR
BRAGE
CLOSE

are bounced back.
That face of the gem remains opaque, and you are bounced back.
That face of the gem remains opaque, and you are bounced back.

tions for finding a key to the dam and for finding the dam door are on a scrap of parchment at the entrance to a maze. Killing an ice golem is necessary to reach this point in the game.

Pulling the dam chain releases some water and exposes the entrance to a ghost town where the staff should be used in a fountain. The ghost's name is Beatrice and she is quite nice to Avatars. A Mani Rune can be found in the far northeast section.

Killorn Keep

Killorn Keep has a tricky trap of candles. To disable the trap, throw the candles into the room. This reveals some headless, a fancy sword, and the gem. The staff must be used in a room guarded by a really nasty monster in disguise. The room contains some brains that keeps the Keep afloat. Altara will build a rod from the pearl she donates, a spider egg, and an amethyst staff located in the Taloris world.

Taloris will be open for exploration only after the Imp has died and Lady Tory has been murdered back in the castle. The demise of the Imp must be reported to Altara to get the staff formula, and Miranda must know of the murder.

The staff is found in the far north center of Taloris, level one. The gem is on an island in the middle of a lava pool on level two. The staff will cut off the Guardian's influence if used in the Bliy Skup Chamber.

The Mage's Exam is the most tedious part of **Underworld 2**. Save often. The gem is located in a large room right down the hall from the entrance to the vault. To cut the Guardian's power here, use Altara's staff while standing in the pentagram where the gem is found.

To get past the lava maze, one button on the left and two on the right should be activated using the wand of Telekinesis found in the entrance. In the teleport maze, find the red floor on each level and count counterclockwise to find a path from level to level. The count is the set of numbers written on the first level of the maze.

The disappearing pillars

To defeat the disappearing pillars, collect all the goodies in the floor level alcoves then jump from pillar to pillar without landing on the arrows. This can be done by standing on the very edge and corner of the takeoff pillar and using the shift-j command rather than the mouse. The vault yields it's secrets only after the Avatar gets dropped into some water after a fiery confrontation. The wise Avatar will swim away from the purple shore and onto a white path, turn left and then go straight on to morning. The path turns, the Avatar does not.

The Pits of Carnage

The Pits of Carnage hide Zaranthus, Dorstag, and some very powerful runes. Dorstag has the gem. Blog can get the gem for a really good pal. Zaranthus is located in the southeast corner of level two. He must be visited at least twice. A Dire Reaper hides the Vas rune, and a Liche guards some Flam runes. Altara's staff must be used in the room that has a cracked wall, lots of gore, and a trapdoor in the ceiling.

Loth's Tomb

Praecor Loth's Tomb will not yield to exploration until poor Nelson bites the stones back at the castle. The shortest route to Loth's location is a quick zig-zag up the center of level three. The fire resistant vest is located in a room at the top of the stairs leading away from a room that catches all who fall through the floors. The gem is found on the first level under a rock fall, at the end of the NW corridor. The staff is used at the same location. Loth's horn is an essential item.

The Ethereal Void

The Ethereal Void can be confusing, but a little patience and a good sense of direction will help. Following each different color path leads to successful completion of some mazes. Each success dumps the Avatar onto a pyramid which will change to the successful color after a game of Q-bert. When each of four colors have been registered on the pyramid, a fifth color will allow access to the Shrine of Spirituality where the gem is hidden and where the staff must be used. It is possible to skip the color process and simply fly up to the shrine level, portal, fly up to the shrine and portal again. Kind of takes the zip out of the game, but it is possible!

Endgame

Endgame requires that the Avatar sever all eight power connections, use all eight gems on the island gem, and discuss the cause of the original problem with both Miranda and Nystal. The Avatar must possess the Horn of Loth and be able to blow it. Windiness is gained by getting an imp inside the Avatar. Instructions for this come from Zaranthus.

The big Z need a wand from the red path in world eight, and gives the Avatar a jug to be used at the end of the white path. Nystal requires the spellbook of Mors Gothra. A mudbath can be taken in the Ice World at the direction of Beatrice, and a lavabath is available in many places. Enjoy! ❑

'Mama'

SSSSSSSSHHHLLEP
He's Lean, He's Mean and He's Out To Clean...
Well-oiled adversaries are out to waste our favorite cosmic custodian.
Meet bodacious babes in the far reaches of space.
Take on interstellar pukoids and nasty phlegm throwers (yeccch)!
He's out to clean up the universe, and it ain't a pretty job!

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Roger Wilco, the universe's favorite janitor, has taken the helm of his own starship. And that's the *good* news! Join Roger and an intergalactic gaggle of misfit shipmates in the most hilarious adventure on this (or any other) planet. Find out why *Game Players* magazine calls the *Space Quest* series "a prime example of why Sierra is at the top of the computer gaming world."
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SIERRA®
Reader Service No. 85

The Prophecy

By Andrew Backer

Designed by
The Coktel Vision Team

Published by
Sierra-On-Line, Inc.

Systems
PC

Supports
Mouse, SoundBlaster, Adlib, Pro

Graphics
VGA

The Prophecy is a high-quality, mouse driven, point-and-click, graphic-adventure designed by the French based Coktel and published in the US by Sierra On-Line. Unlike most Sierra games there is no need to interview other characters, and there are no movement options. A screen comes up, it contains objects, and the adventurer gets to the next screen by manipulating the objects and then clicking on an exit icon.

A left click picks up an object, or uses it, and a right click drops it or places it in inventory. Most objects need to be operated on by other objects: a reed needs to be operated on by a knife before it turns into a flute.

The story is fairy tale simple. The prophecy proclaims, 'On the day of the great eclipse, if three grains of sand are placed in the 'revuss' (a magical hour glass) by a brave hero, the enemy will be vanquished.' Evil master sorcerer Kraal, the enemy, wants to replace Ohkram, the good old master sorcerer and protector of the Kingdom. Ohkram, who has lost his powers, entrusts the hero (his apprentice magician) Ween to find the three magic grains of sand. Kraal sets up obstacles in

How to STOP playing *The*

1. Bowling ball falls down ramps.
2. Bowling ball tips see-saw, pulling string.
3. String pulls switch, turning on light bulb.
4. Light shines through the magnifying glass, lighting rocket.
5. Rocket lights fuse, exploding dynamite.
6. Dynamite explodes, pushing pail off ledge.
7. Pail pulls string, shooting gun.
8. Bullet bursts balloon.
9. Bucket falls on hamster cage, making hamster run.

Puzzle Game of the Year
Computer Game Review

Offer Number 370. Expires 12/31/93

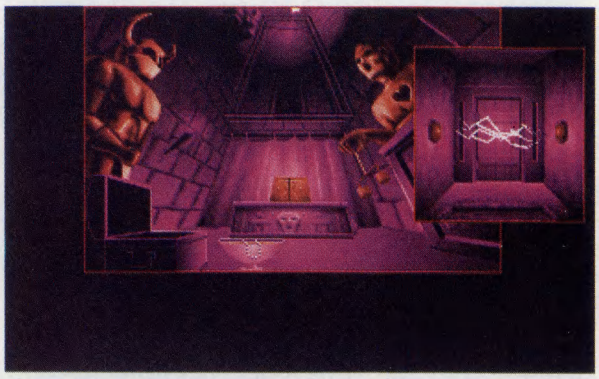
Ween's way. Ween must prove he's not a weenie and fulfil his mission for the adventurer to win the game.

In true Sierra-like fashion there's a bit of comedy and a bit of romance along the way. Two heavily mustached, idiot twins provide some laughs as they help Ween in his quest by carrying his inventory bag. A ravenously hungry vampire bat, Urm, helps Ween in exchange for a supply of strawberries. Petroy, an old, telepathic friend of Ohkram helps Ween decipher ancient texts. Finally, Kraal has imprisoned, Opale, the beautiful Volcanic Princess. Opale communicates with Ween in his dreams.

The graphics and sound are superior, beginning with the opening crash of thunder and a banging shutter in the animated introduction and there are animated clips throughout the game. There is an effective mood enhancing musical background (which can be turned off by those who find it not so effective).

Many puzzles involve putting objects together to form a product that solves the puzzle. For example, the adventurer is presented with the problem of getting to a nearby island. He has at his disposal a boat, an oar, a spider, large animal bones, lobster traps, coconut trees and bamboo shoots. He also has in his inventory a net, a hammer and a sword. The adventurer must transform the boat (and other objects) into a sailing craft complete with mast, sail, rudder and floats.

Solutions to the puzzles are logical, but they are also often whimsical. For example, the spider will spin enough fabric to make a sail if bribed with fish eggs. There are 'jokers' that provide solutions if the adventurer is frustrated enough to want to use them.



The game isn't really at the level of recent Sierra games (particularly **King's Quest VI**), since it is so modular and puzzle oriented. It doesn't play like so much like one unified adventure, but more like twenty or so loosely connected scenarios. Still, **The Prophecy** is a high quality addition to the Sierra stable and should provide hours of enjoyment for the puzzle hungry.❑

Incredible Machine™ (in 14 easy steps).

12. Balloon turns on motor switch.

13. Motor starts fan, pushing tennis ball off ledge.

14. Tennis ball trips see-saw, sending bowling ball crashing onto *your* computer.

11. Scissors cut balloon string.

10. Jack-in-the-box pops up, hitting scissors.

Non-Stop Fun
(because you just can't stop)

Getting people to play *The Incredible Machine* isn't hard. Getting them to stop is! Combine ingenuity and obsession in this incredible workshop for your computer. Try solving over 85 puzzles by creating convoluted contraptions (like the one in this picture), using pulleys, bowling balls, hamsters, monkeys, candles, balloons, and a whole assortment of bizarre machine parts. *The Incredible Machine* features timed play, and a free form mode that lets you stretch your inventive mind to the limit. Pick it up at a software dealer near you.

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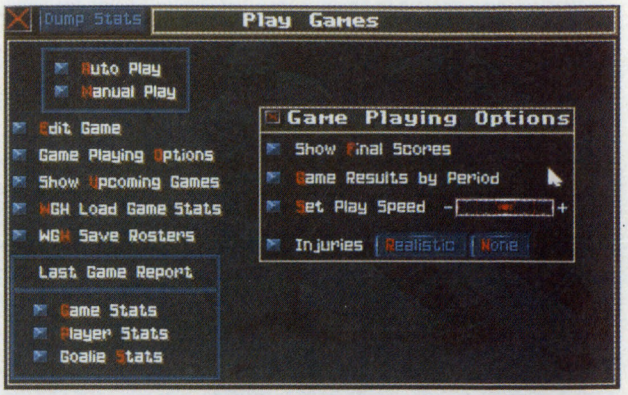
While supplies last

SIERRA®

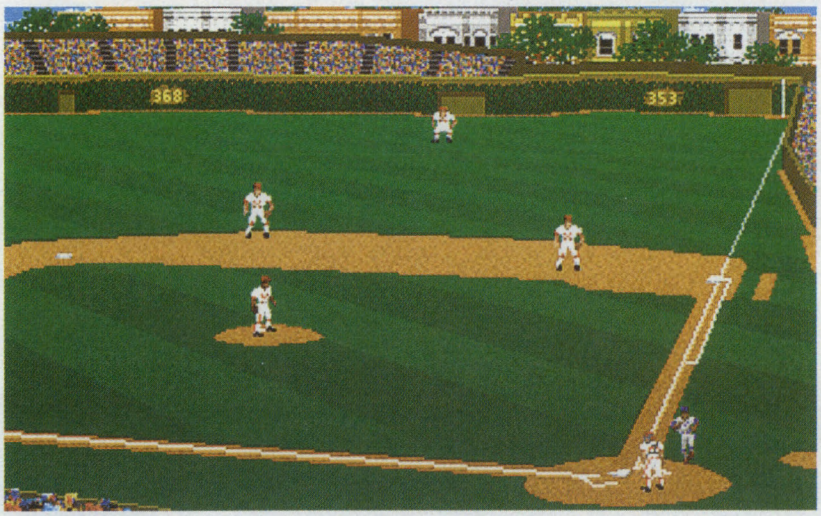
Reader Service No. 85

The Sports Locker

Joseph McCullough asks: do add-ons add up?



Hockey League Simulator II: complete simulation



Hardball III: Wrigley Field

Hardball III Stadium Big League Ballpark Disk

Designed by
Mindspan Technologies, Corp.

Stadium art by
Taunya Shiffer, Jeff Sturgeon, John Boechler

Published by
Accolade

Systems
IBM PC

Graphics
VGA

Notes
Requires **Hardball III**

The following is a scene from *The Great Money Grab*; coming soon to a software store near you!

Bigbucks software: Psst! Hey you, over there.
Sports game enthusiast: Uh, me?
Bigbucks: Yes *you*! Come 'ere. I see you're playin' our latest game. Nice graphics, eh?
Enthusiast: Yeah, they're the best I've seen, but the game seems to be missing something.
Bigbucks (coyly): I think I can solve your problem.
Enthusiast (desperately): Really? I'd pay almost anything for some more excitement.
Bigbucks: As a matter of fact, our programmers have been working long hours and have come up with this gotta-have-it add-on disk to make our games even more exciting. You interested?
Enthusiast: Yes! How much? When can I have it? I need it now!
Bigbucks: Oh, it's only $29.95, and if you throw in another $5.00, I can send one out to you via overnight courier.
Enthusiast: Great! I'll take it!

Sure, that's a fairly cynical take on the whole add-on market. In reality, most add-on disks contribute genuine value to the original game, and are well worth the money. Other times, however, the consumer is left feeling ripped off after buying a crippled game only to see the missing features being hawked as an expansion disk a few months later.

I'd lump most baseball game add-ons in the latter category. It seems every popular baseball game has a slew of companion disks available that do no more than add data files that should have been offered with the game in the first place. The latest is Accolade's **Hardball III Big League Ballpark Disk**. This is no more than a set of graphics files that resemble major league ball parks; some good, others nondescript. The best files are those that depict ballparks with real character. For example, Wrigley Field is a joy to play in, but Riverfront Stadium isn't. Riverfront resembles every other modern ballpark, and therefore the file adds nothing in particular to the game except for the small amount of security one feels knowing the dimensions are accurate.

What else does this disk have to offer? It includes the schedules for the Colorado Rockies and Florida Marlins expansion teams. This 'bonus' is brightly advertised on the package exterior, ostensibly to further trick the gullible gamer into thinking he's getting something new and exciting for his money. But that's it - a bunch of files that were left out of **Hardball III** and a schedule anyone with access to **USA Today** can read for fifty cents. This is disappointing to say the least, but I'm sure avid fans of **Hardball III** will willingly plunk down the extra cash without thinking they're being swindled. Ain't the free market concept wonderful?

An add-on disk with a bit more substance came to me this month from Access software: the long-awaited **Mauna Key Links Championship Course** for **Links386 Pro**, **Links**, or **Microsoft Golf**. Although I was irked with Access for not including more than one course with **Links386**, this expansion disk is well worth the price. Some *real* work went into producing this product. The company spent days photographing the famed course from every possible angle, and then digitized these images in Super VGA and VGA resolutions for use with their wildly popular golf simulations.

The result is breathtaking. If everyone thought the Harbour Town course that came with **Links386** was stunning, they'll be floored by the sheer beauty of **Mauna Key**. What adds the most to this course is the indigenous flora and lava rock that was captured by the artists at Access. Hole 3 in particular is a masterpiece. The player tees off over a jet black shoreline of ancient lava rock, being careful not to land his ball in the deep blue waters of the Pacific Ocean. Off to the right stand tall, inviting palm trees and exotic shrubbery.

Twice The Mind-Munching Madness With Two Interactive Imps.

". . . you will want to snatch this one up. Its intelligent design and cute good looks will hook you right from the start."

-Game Players Magazine

". . . a delightful mix of adventure and puzzle gaming that will leave your gray matter positively fried."

- Video Games and Computer Entertainment

FROM THE CREATORS OF GOBLIIINS

Teamwork. It sounds like a great idea, but when you put these two whimsical imps together the results are more hilarious than productive. You will take control of Winkle and Fingus who are on a mission to rescue the King's son from the clutches of evil. They must work together as they take on a whole smorgasbord of twisted traps, maniacal monsters and perplexing puzzles. It won't be easy, and don't let their size fool you. These are two imps with a serious attitude.

FEATURES

- **Simultaneous multi-character mouse control.**
- **Highly animated characters with hilarious and often unpredictable personalities.**
- **Humorous sound effects and lively background music.**
- **Seven brain-busting episodes each with up to five interconnected scenes.**

". . . as puzzling as a Rubik's Cube with a bad attitude."

-The Newark Advocate

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You control two new hilarious imps...

...as you unravel brain-bending puzzles...

...and face off with really weird folks.

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COKTEL VISION

Part of the Sierra Family

Links 386 Pro: Mauna Kea

Mauna Key Links Championship Course

Designed and published by
Access Software

Systems
PC

Graphics
VGA, Super VGA

Notes
Requires **Links**, **Links386 Pro**, or **Microsoft Golf**

Hockey League Simulator II

Designed by
S McKisic, N A Volkov

Published by
Bethesda Softworks

Systems
IBM PC

Graphics
VGA

Supports
Mouse

Players
One or multiple

Notes
Can work in conjunction with **Wayne Gretzky Hockey III**, but will also run as a stand-alone

The green hugs the shore, and stands high enough to give the player an expansive view of the island paradise.

In addition to the wonderful **Links386** course, Access also threw in versions for **Links** and **Microsoft Golf**. For **Links386** owners, they included the latest version of the executable file (version 1.08). All of these perks make the **Mauna Key Links Championship Course** a great value. One word of caution, however. I had trouble running the course with **Links386** on a machine with only 4 meg of RAM. It consistently locked up on me when re-drawing a hole after tee-off. Only when I upgraded my computer to 8 meg did the problems cease.

From the links to the rinks; we shall now take a gander at what amounts to more of a stand-alone game than any expansion disk I've seen. **Hockey League Simulator II** from Bethesda Softworks is a complete simulation of major league hockey management — from the wheeling and dealing of the front office to coaching a team through an entire season. Unlike baseball add-ons such as the **Fantasy Manager** for **Tony LaRussa Baseball**, this game works in conjunction with **Wayne Gretzky Hockey 3**, but does not require its companion to function. Players have control over everything (if they choose). Coaches can be fired and hired, players can be sent to the farm team or brought up to the pros, and custom leagues and schedules can be formed. Game options can also be turned on or off, depending on how detailed a simulation the player wants. These include injuries, salary caps, negotiations, streaks/slumps, and if the coach affects how teams play their game.

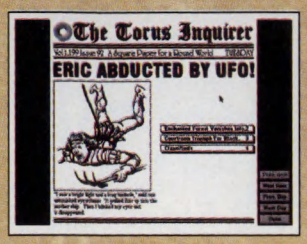
Once a league is created, players are drafted, teams are formed, and a schedule is underway, the player can opt to export team files for any scheduled game to **WGH3**. The games can then be played in real-time and their results exported back to **HLS2**. On the other hand, a season can be simulated entirely within the confines of **HLS2**. If **HLS2** handles the action, the results can be viewed by final score, or by period score. They can also be simulated at varying speeds, the fastest of which can replay an entire season in under half an hour.

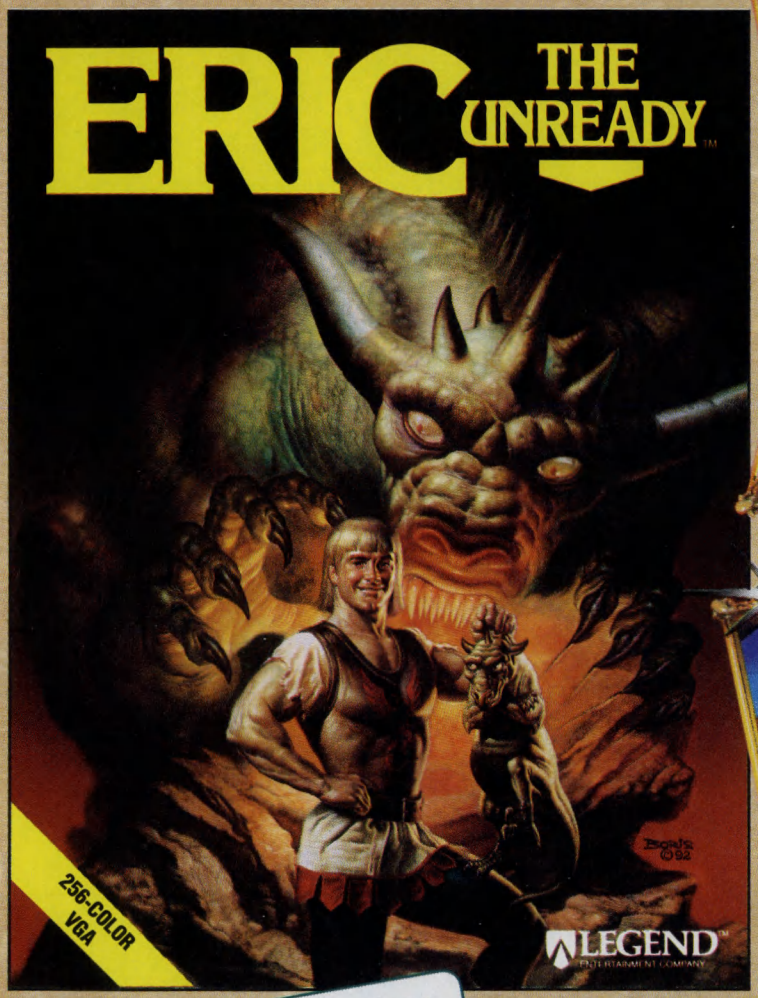
Needless to say, stats are tracked throughout the entire season, and are available from a choice on the main menu. All hockey stats are kept, including league records, league leaders, and team stats. A player can consult the stats to see if any of his players are not performing up to potential, and then send them to the farm club to free up some extra cash for negotiations.

All this detail begs for a smooth interface, and although Bethesda claims they have improved this feature over version 1, it is still lacking. The menu structure is confusing, and one doesn't really know how all the different options tie together without spending a great deal of time playing the game. Some game features are only available via function keys, but the fact that they exist is not indicated anywhere on the main menu. The most glaring fault is in the stats module. When the first screen appears, only one league division is displayed. To change divisions, one has to click on a box on the bottom of the screen. Problem is, the mouse cursor doesn't travel far enough down the screen to be able to access these buttons. This problem may be native to my machine, but I'd think if I'm seeing it, others will too.

Still, as accessory programs go, **HLS2** is unique. One could even argue that **WGH3** is a companion to **HLS2**, not the other way around. Both complement the other in different ways, and the two together comprise quite a formidable hockey simulation.❑

"Catch a dragon? No sweat!"





Here's what the experts are saying about *Eric the Unready.*

"A comedy adventure full of whimsy and wonder"
—Computer Gaming World

"Eric is flat-out funny. There's comedy for everyone and a good quest to boot."
—Computer Game Review

"A wonderfully hilarious adventure"
—Game Bytes Magazine

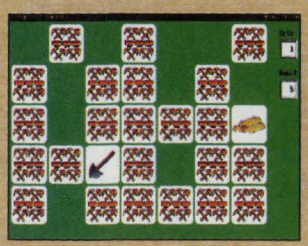
Eric the Unready established his reputation by impaling his instructor during jousting class. Then, when Princess Lorealle the Worthy is kidnapped, Eric begins a madcap quest through this hilarious fantasy world packed with dragons and dwarves, wizards, unicorns, and the most fearsome beasts of all, the dreaded Attack Turtles.

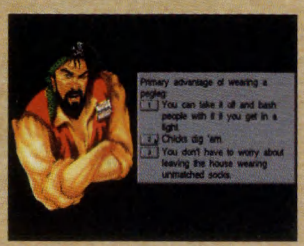
Every player will find at least one favorite movie, TV show or adventure game that has been struck by Bob Bates' pen! From the award-winning author of *TIMEQUEST.*

"I laughed till my pants fell down!"
Larry Laffner

"More fun than a barrel of monkeys!"
Guywood Threepbrush

- **Breathtaking fantasy art!**
- **256-color VGA**
- **Awesome sound track**
- **New menu-driven system for conversing with characters**
- **Intriguing mix of interfaces creates a constantly changing graphical scene**




Primary advantage of wearing a pegleg:
1 You can take it off and bash people with it if you get in a fight.
2 Chicks dig 'em.
3 You don't have to worry about leaving the house wearing unmatched socks.

LEGEND™
ENTERTAINMENT COMPANY
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Chantilly, VA 22021

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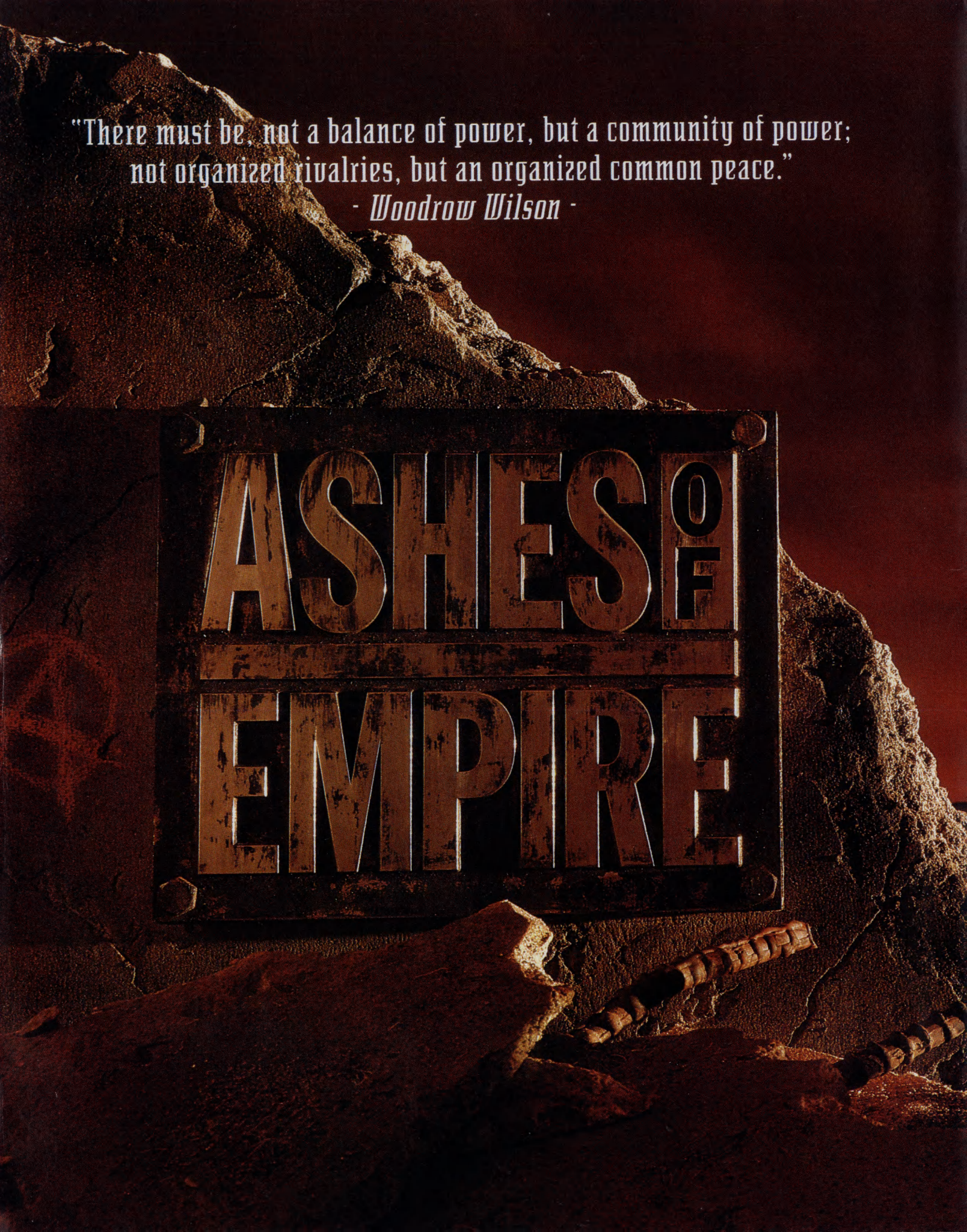
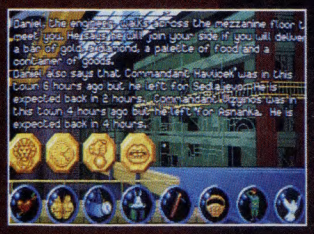
ERIC THE UNREADY is a trademark of Legend Entertainment Company.
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. **Actual VGA graphics shown.**
Reader Service No. 110


"There must be, not a balance of power, but a community of power;
not organized rivalries, but an organized common peace."
- Woodrow Wilson -
ASHES OF EMPIRE



You must choose your own diplomatic strategy when dealing with people.

Flying one of many vehicles, you attack a ground target.

Each town holds the potential of new allies and resources to acquire.

The harsh reality of an empire torn apart.

In a modern world, what happens when empires fall... Inspired by the tumultuous events in Eastern Europe, Mike Singleton and his team have created Ashes of Empire, their biggest game to date. Ashes is a complex fusion of adventure and strategy which places demands on all your powers of diplomacy and intelligence. As you enter the heartland of your one-time great adversary, you must find a strategy to bring order to chaos, while at the same time avoiding the initiation of a nuclear conflict with an embittered and desperate people, mistrustful of your intentions in this New World Order.

- Free instructional videotape
- Keyboard function overlay
- Over 6,000 unique characters
- Full free movement in a 3-D environment of 2.8 million sq. miles and 9,000 locations.

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Down the Upgrade Path

Bugs, Glitches, Undocumented Features - You're dead!

	Publisher/Game	New Features
408 737 6800	**SSI** **Great Naval Battles North Atlantic**	Update to **Great Naval Battles of the North Atlantic**. There is also a new readme file that explains much about the workings of **GNB** and the patch.
	Tony LaRussa's Ultimate Baseball	Upgrade to 1.1
408 955 1700	**ACCOLADE** **Jack Nicklaus Signature Edition v1.5 Rev.**	This rev fixes the **Mini-M**oses effect caused by several objects being placed after a hill crest. This file contains GOLF.EXE, READ.ME and RESULTS.EXE and is for v1.4 owners only. If you have a previous version you will need to obtain JNSE14.ZIP also, which contains the additional v1.4 DESIGN.EXE file not included here.
301 926 8300	**BETHESDA SOFTWORKS** **Wayne Gretzky Hockey III**	This version fixes CH FlightStick and other throttle control (non-standard) joysticks. Scoring and penalties have been adjusted. For more specific information and additional fixes see the enclosed README file.
	Hockey League Simulator II	Upgrade to version 1.1
209 683 4468	**SIERRA ON-LINE/DYNAMIX** **486 Sound Blaster Driver for VGA Games**	This file is for 486 owners encountering initialization difficulties with either the Sound Blaster, Sound Blaster Pro, or the Thunder Board when playing a Sierra game. Please read the READ.ME file before installing the driver to the appropriate game subdirectory. Note: These drivers will work for all games released *after* Space Quest IV.
	Island of Dr Brain	Update Patches Fixes Ooops 10 error, music room puzzle, and several other problems. Read the README file before applying patches.
	Red Baron Mission Builder	Fix for STB VGA card BIOS problems. This patch is only necessary for customers with STB VGA cards experiencing multiple screens in the Mission Builder screen.
	Front Page Sports Football	Enhancement program that addresses a number of issues.
310 320 5215	**MINDCRAFT** **Star Legions**	Fixes some problems with lockups on specific machine specifications. It also fixes the problem with phasers firing out of the FOV, some changes to mission ratings, fixes to the award sequence, etc.
	Sound Blaster fix	New set of Mindcraft Sound Blaster drivers to fix incompatibility ('SoundBlaster not working') with the latest Sound Blaster boards. These files can go into the game directory for any of our recent games. Just copy files into the game directory and the program will load automatically.
	Magic Candle III **Update to Version 1.13**	This update fixes some problems with an incorrectly named AdLib file and also some treasures that were not appearing in the game. Some fixes to speeches given (or not being given) by NPCs are also included. Update that Includes are fixes for Charter/Scepter exchange which was damaged in version 1.15; Mirror of Honesty/candle wick problem where items could not be dug up; characters transfered from MC2 not getting god's boons.
305 935 3995	**GAMETEK** **Humans**	This removes the crash out bug on level 21 of HUMANS that occurs on some 5.25 versions of the game out there. Just replace the EXE file with the enclosed EXE file.
708 866 1864	**D C TRUE** **Shadow President**	We have released this maintenance patch in order to fix several minor problems that were found in the original release. To determine if this patch is needed, check the date on a file named SHADOW.EXE in the directory containing **Shadow President**. Do this by changing to the **Shadow President** directory and typing DIR SHADOW.EXE. If the date on this file is prior to 11/24/92, this patch will be needed. Update patch that will save 30k of RAM
510 254 9700	**MAXIS** **Sim Life**	This is the patch for the DOS problems. If you are having problems with your mouse, call the manufacturer of your mouse to get the latest upgrade. Special mouse veterinarian on call 24 hours a day at your local friendly dealer through your local telephone service or through any on-line service.

Another Mark Baldwin Triumph!!

Can You Be? . . .

The Perfect General

The Ultimate Challenge of Strategy and Tactics!

Illustration by
Mare Pagodin Downs
©1991
Mare Pagodin Downs

QQP
Quantum Quality Productions, Inc.

This game is based on a twelve year old tournament series and includes a highly refined yet simple playing system.

- Gorgeous playing field and landscapes.
- Clean and simple interface.
- Two difficulty levels.
- You control every move and fire of your forces.
- Superior artificial intelligence.
- One or two players, human or computer, plus play by modem.
- A wide range of intriguing scenarios.
- The thrill and sounds of artillery, tanks and infantry in action.

"The Perfect General" computer game is IBM PC and Amiga compatible. It can be obtained through your favorite retailer or ordered direct by calling: 1-908-788-2799.

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Upgrades *cont'd*

	Publisher/Game	New Features
801 359 2900	**ACCESS** **Amazon**	This fixes the problem of getting the raft out of the box in the airplane. Just copy this file into the **Amazon** directory and it will allow you to get the raft.
	Links 386 Pro	Update Version 1.08. This is the current **Links 386 Pro** update Version and includes the new executable file and the original 1.07 VESA Library. The executable now allows the game to run under OS/2 and other DPMI operating systems and software. Note: Some of those other operating systems/software may require restricting or even disabling any sound cards in use. The Compaq VESA driver is not yet available. Compaq has said it will be another 4 to 6 weeks before they will allow Access to provide it in their VESA Library.
410 771 0440	**MICROPROSE** **F-15 III**	For those having a problem installing **F-15-III**, this is the patch for you! Plus, a new file that contains the patches which will eliminate the need to insert the key disk. A README file is included which explains how to patch the game.
	Task Force: 1942	This update corrects the waypoint problem and others listed in the READ.ME file.
	Twilight 2000	Update for adds extra sound and graphics, and includes a new ending to the game.
	F117A Stealth Fighter	This update requires version .03.
512 328 5490	**ORIGIN** **Underworld II**	Major upgrade
	Ultima VII	Upgrade patch for that will allow you to upgrade your old version (3.0) to the new version (3.4). This version has a detector that will check savegames for corruption. If it detects corruption it will ask you if you want to terminate.
818 973 4015	**DISNEY** **Stunt Island**	Latest update that also contains helpful information about the program.
708 215 5100	**KONAMI** **Batman Returns**	Latest update
908 788 2799	**QQP** **Solitaire's Journey**	Patch that updates the original version 1.0 to the current version 1.03. It fixes a couple of minor bugs and provides improved mouse support. You probably only need this file if you have had a problem with saved Tournament games or if you are having problems using your mouse.
615 842 2098	**MICRO SPORTS** **Pro League Football**	This upgrade contains fixes, upgrades, and additional schedules.
408 879 9144	**THREE SIXTY** **V for Victory: Utah Beach 2.0.**	A comprehensive upgrade that improves the quality of the AI amongst other things. Available to registered users for $5 only from Three Sixty.
	Harpoon 1.3.	Fixes everything short of global warming.
303 660 8354	**COLORADO CREATIONS** **High Command 1.1.**	See comments for **Harpoon 1.3**
708 520 4440	**ICOM SIMULATIONS** **Sherlock Holmes Consulting Detective**	This version corrects problems with audio and video cards with non-standard settings. It also searches for a Pro Audio Spectrum card before a Sound Blaster, allowing PAS16 owners to use the PAS instead of SB.

All of these patches are available free to regsistered users. If you are such a body, then contact the company concerned. Those with modems can download these files from commercial bulletin boards such as CompuServe and GENie.

Bruce Williams Zaccagnino's and Thurston Searfoss! . . .

The Lost Admiral

The Strategy and Tactics Game of the Decade!!

Illustration by
Mare Pagodin Downs
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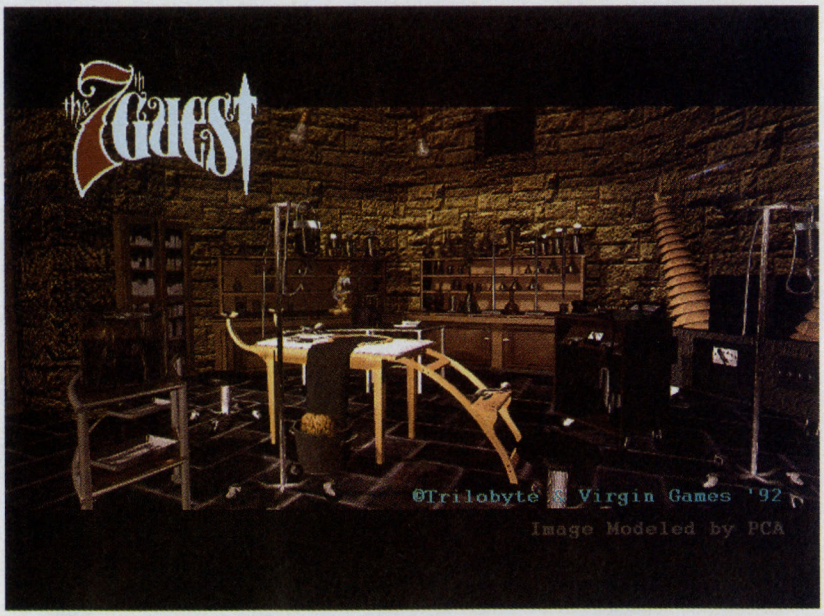
CD NEW

Ian Marsh and Sandy Eisen try some pristine programs



7th Guest

If anyone, anywhere, really wants to know what CD-ROM can do, then take a look at **7th Guest** from Virgin Games via Trilobyte. Without doubt it is a stunning multimedia combination of SVGA graphics (full-motion video and atmospheric sound) in which the player is cast as an explorer of a quite undoubtedly haunted house.

The mouse-driven player-computer interface is easy to use: a beckoning skeletal hand indicates which directions can be investigated; a throbbing skull or happy/sad theatrical mask seems to indicate something that merits further investigation and provides a close-up of objects in the rooms.

Movement, within the limits of the speed of a CD-ROM drive, is also quite fluid, with grand sweeping motions leading the player's eye to the next area of interest. There are, inevitably, some jerky bits, but considering the graphical resolution of the pictures this is understandable.

Although Miss Virgin Games has won the beauty contest, however, she regrettably seems to be lacking in the brain department. In spite of the number of things that go bump in the night – encounters with what appear to be past residents that act out murderous scenes – **7th Guest** doesn't really appear to contain much of a game.

The SVGA graphics, too, are a bit of a cheat: they are letterboxed, giving the effect of Panavision but chopping off several inches of vertical picture space in the process. They are also quite gloomy, necessitating a severe tweak of the brightness control to make out much of the house's decorations and furnishings.

Similarly, the dual jewel box is also misleading. Only one of the CDs within contains the game (admittedly at about 600Mb); the other duplicates the files to be found on a floppy disk, weighing in at 550k. Don't, in other words, get misled by the packaging. While **7th Guest** ably demonstrates some of the capabilities of CD-ROM and its big advantage – saving on disk count – it also reveals that the exponents of multimedia don't really know what to do with it at the moment. Games players now have the facility for marvellously linked sound and vision using a 'one-disk' practical format, but they must surely be crying out for the games that use it well.❑

Ian Marsh

Space Quest IV: Roger Wilco and the Time Rippers

Space Quest IV was highly rated by *Strategy Plus*, topping its readers' awards in the adventure section. Reviewed in issue 8, it was hinted that Sierra was already at work on the CD-ROM version: it has now arrived.

What CD-ROM, therefore, gives us is speech, not speech bubbles. Instead of staring intently at text on screen, a digitized hammy voice (sounding not unlike Leslie Nielsen from *Police Squad*) describes everything that hero Roger Wilco can see, smell and touch. It adds immensely to the humour of the game (although I should say here that a hammy voice in **7th Guest** detracts horribly from the atmosphere – a lesson that to make multimedia work, the voices need to be up to scratch), which like all adventure games is infuriatingly difficult to advance through.

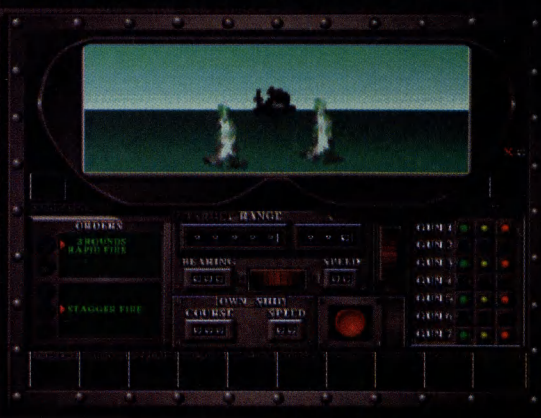
Unfortunately, the downside of losing the text is that vast motionless pictures occupy the screen; there is too little to look at while the game progresses. It shows that a lot more thought about how a game presents itself to the player is going to be needed, and that straight conversions are just going to fall down at this level. I guess one can't yet have it both ways, although at least think of the hard disk space being saving (some 175Mb)!❑

Ian Marsh

Ships of Steel, Men of

on CD ROM

Jutland



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7th Guest

Designed by
Trilobyte

Published by
Virgin Games

Systems
PC CD ROM

Graphics
SVGA only

Battlechess

Published by
Interplay

Systems
PC CD ROM

Graphics
VGA, SVGA

Notes
Floppy version also available

Space Quest IV

Published by
Sierra On-Line

Systems
PC CD ROM

Notes
Floppy version also available

Battle Chess

Interplay's animated chess program has been around for about five years. What makes it special and different from all other computer chess programs is that the pieces are displayed as 3D human figures and when pieces are captured the game displays an animated fight between the pieces involved. The animations are well done and most player's first reaction is to say 'How Cute!' and watch a few more animations.This was my reaction when I first came across the program on the Atari ST many years ago. The next stage is to take capture more pieces just to see all the animations.

I followed exactly the same sequence of reactions with this enhanced version of the PC program. The 3D board display and combat animations are vastly superior to those I remember on the ST (I am not familiar with the original PC version). In glorious Super VGA and with a choreographed sound track (assuming a sound card is available) of footsteps, clangs, whooshes, screams and sniggers, each animation is a delightful and usually witty display of the computer animator's art. See one, and you have to see them all. There are 2 versions of the program on the CD-ROM. One is the DOS Super VGA version (which I preferred) which runs in 640x480 resolution with 256 colours. There is also a Windows version, grandly called Multimedia Chess which displays in whatever resolution Windows uses.

The Windows program requires 3.1 or 3.0 with multimedia extensions. Both versions offer soundboard support and need at least 2MB RAM.

Each version must be installed on a hard drive before the programs can be run, although the basic program does not take up much space. The animations for both programs are held in a 33MB data file which is normally read from the CD-ROM drive as the game is played. If desired the data file can also be copied to hard disk to speed up animation loads.

Both program versions include an animated speech tutorial in which the playing pieces walk on and introduce themselves and explain the rules in 'character actor' speech. This is quite slickly done, and includes a degree of Hollywood humour. A major disadvantage is that the tutorial is a single entity lasting over half an hour and which can only be run in its entirety.

Interplay are to be congratulated for adding value to the CD-ROM version of the PC program. Players who know and use the original **Battle Chess** will enjoy the enhancements, whilst players looking for a chess program where the pieces stab, punch, shoot, poison or magically blast each other, can be reassured that the CD-ROM version offers all this and more.❑

Sandy Eisen

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"...clearly one of the best simulations of any type - indeed, one of the best games in general - to appear in a very long time." **PC Strategy Guide**

"...here's a nomination for computer game of the year... It's one product that is definitely right on track." **Chicago Tribune**

Overall Game of the Year; "... a lifetime of gaming in one product... **CGW**'s Game of the Year is rcognized because of its unique subject matter, excellent presentation, and exceptional game paly." **Computer Gaming World**

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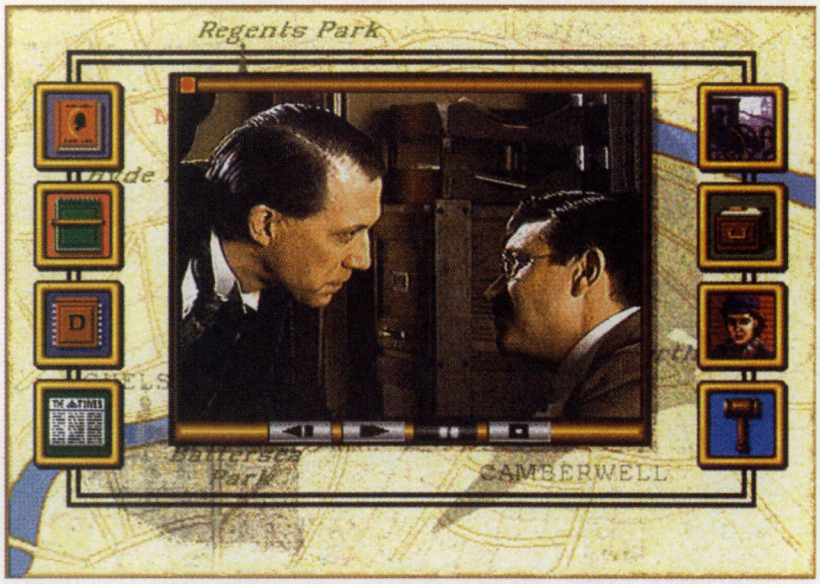

Sherlock Holmes Consulting Detective Volume II

Published by
ICOM Simulations

Systems
PC CD ROM

Graphics
SVGA only

Supports
Mouse, most soundcards

Without a doubt, **Sherlock Holmes Consulting Detective** is a game that has at last found its right medium: CD-ROM. Originally a clever but dreary-looking pencil and paper game, CD-ROM has brought Holmes' London alive with real-time video, VGA graphics, digitized voices - everything, really, apart from a racy theme tune and a peasouper fog that spews forth from a drive bay.

The game engine in **Volume II** is the same as it is in the original game, with the same audio introduction to Holmes' helpers and resources. If you're new to the game go through these introductions to get an idea of where you can go when you get stuck, as stuck you will inevitably get! Making notes of names, professions and locations will help avoid running round in circles during the game itself.

Volume II provides three more mysteries for budding Holmes' to solve: The Two Lions, The Pilfered Paintings and The Murdered Munitions Magnate. One of titles I recognize from the pen and paper mysteries, so I suspect that Icom Simulations is translating all the old stuff into the new format. That's no bad thing: there can be few people who remember the originals, and fewer still who can remember who dunnit.

In essence there are two ways of starting a case: either one will be referred to a copy of the London *Times* at a pertinent date, or will get a full video introduction from someone who wishes Holmes to take on his case. **Volume I** included some pseudo-reprints of pages of *The Times,* which are strangely missing from **Volume II**. The omission doesn't hamper any detective work as electronic copies are available from within the game itself, although at least one copy differs slightly from its paper equivalent in some small details. It is, however, more convenient to have the paper available as a play aid while the rest of the game is up on screen.

Once on the case - the player has to follow up clues, such as names and locations from *The Times* or people he talks to - moving about London is achieved by clicking on names in either Holmes' notebook or the London Directory, a commendably quick and easy-to-use system. Names in the directory that have been investigated can be transferred to the notebook by simple mouse operations, keeping those names pertinent to the investigation more ready to hand.

Unfortunately, the notebook is no more sophisticated than a personal address book, and any real detective notes have to be made on paper. As all the information is delivered in real time, it results in plenty of furious scribbling!

The cases vary in difficulty. Like reading a murder mystery, you either rapidly grasp what is going on or founder in a morass of non-information and red herrings. The Murdered Munitions Magnate, for example, took about 20 minutes to solve; yet the solution to The Two Lions has so far proved elusive, and as Holmes I appear to have run out of clues.

At this point the game structure can fall down. If a player is truly stuck he can simply apply the slow and methodical approach of working through the London Directory until it has been exhausted of encounters. That way one is sure to get enough points to proceed to court.

Once the game judges that the player has encountered enough relevant clues to be able to make a case of the investigation, it is possible to go to court to see whether the right person has been fingered. This is a multiple choice affair conducted in front of a video judge, the real flaw of which is that if the player gets something wrong, he can restart the court section and have another guess - and keep guessing until he gets it right. Real satisfaction, however, comes from a case well investigated and pursued to its conclusion.

The game is an indication of the capabilities of CD-ROM and multimedia, yet also one of its limits. A sharp-minded sleuth will exhaust the disk quite quickly - in a matter of hours, not days. And that surely makes the case that six-disk games and drives are needed for such projects to be really worthwhile.❑

Ian Marsh

TWELVE ROADS TO GETTYSBURG

This new program from E Books is not a game but a multimedia presentation published on CD-ROM by an amateur historian.The package runs under Windows, with Multimedia extensions and a soundboard being required for audio. It is clearly a labour of love by an enthusiast who has presented a balanced view of the history, and one which demonstrates the state-of-the-art for multimedia publishing on a military history subject. As such it demonstrates the benefits and limitations of current technology.

The main menu offers 5 primary choices: Campaign and Strategy, The Battle, Confederate Armies and Leaders, Union Armies and Leaders, and Gettysburg Today. Each choice leads to a further set of options. For example Campaign and Strategy results in 6 secondary headings: War to Date, Lee's Plan, Map Legend (animates and explains the campaign map which accompanies this section), Campaign Overview, Campaign Detail and Aftermath. A spoken commentary reads the text in the fashion of a television documentary.

The interactive approach of the program allowed easy pauses and repeats, and the quality and detail of the text and maps was much better than I would expect even from even a good TV program. Map graphics were satisfactory - at least the equal of a TV animation, and were far more usful in a multimedia context. However the digitised photos were of poor quality.

The animated battle maps are unique and the the best feature of the program. In several places during the narrative of the battle, the map of the whole battlefield is replaced by a close-up which includes details down to individual regiments. Sadly these map zooms are not animated, have no spoken commentary and are relatively rare.

At certain points the sound effects of battle can be heard, and in others military music plays. The music adds greatly to the atmosphere; the extracts are from the Americana Heritage Cornet and Saxhorn Band who recreate Civil War music with contemporary instruments. The stirring marches left me desiring longer extracts, and wanting to learn more about the subject, which is possible as sources are quoted.

I am sceptical that the program, at least in its current form, should be accepted as an alternative to books. The order of battle information is fascinating to browse through, and presents many interesting anecdotes and biographies. However, it is difficult to see the overall organisation from top to bottom, some information of interest to wargamers (such as weapon type used) is omitted, and it is not possible to print out any extracts.

The animated map has not yet been pushed to the limits of technology. What I would like to see would be a fully scrolling and zooming map on which the positions and manoeuvres of any and all units (at any unit level and at any time) can be displayed, either frozen, or moving at any time scale desired.

As Longstreet's attack begins Meade orders the Fifth Corps to Sickles' assistance from its reserve position by Rock Creek, and Caldwell's Division of the Second Corps from its position on Cemetary Ridge.
After an artillery duel, Hood's division advances south of the Union position. In the lead are Robertson's Texas Brigade, the premier shock troops of the Army of Northern Virginia. These men sweep across the marshy branch of Plum Run and smash into the Devil's Den, while Hood orders part of his force to make for the Round Tops, which he perceives to be the key to the battlefield, and turn north.
Lee
Meade
Fifth Corps
Hood
GoBack
Pause
Return to Main Menu
Continue

The single greatest failing of '**12 Roads**' is the frequent delays while data is loaded from disc. Delays do not occur at every screen change, but at all menu choices, at and other times too. These delays, frequently of 20 to 30 seconds, are so pervasive that it is impossible not to notice them.

The first generation of CD-ROM drives, which includes nearly all currently on the market, allow data transfer at a rate of 150k per second (with a track search time of about 300 milliseconds or more). This is easily an order of magnitude slower than modern hard disks, to which we have become accustomed. A new generation of CD drives are just starting to appear which, by spinning the disc three time as fast, manage to triple the data transfer rate.

I enjoyed the program, but I cannot pretend that it did not require a lot of patience at times, nor can I deny that without data-search delays the whole experience would have been more intense and exciting. Critics of this opinion can, with some justification, riposte that this is history and scholarship, not 'Mario the Hedgehog' or some other pre-pubescent test of reflexes.

Those who are already familiar with the campaign and battle will enjoy the fresh approach and new perspectives offered by the maps and commentaries, while newcomers will rapidly understand this great battle's events and significance, and hopefully be stimulated enough to read the books *and* play the games.❑

Sandy Eisen

Designed by
Steve Hawks

Published by
E Books

Systems
PC (Windows 3x required) and Mac CD ROMS

Supports
Soundblaster, MIcrosoft Multimedia Extensions

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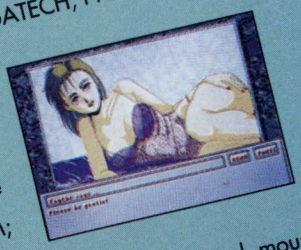

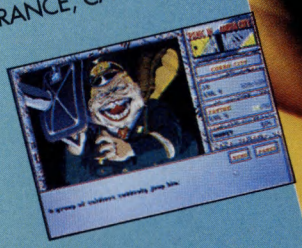

ACTUAL VGA SCREEN IMAGES

System requirements:
286 or faster machine with 640K RAM; hard disk with min. 12 megabytes of available space required, mouse recommended. Graphics compatible with EGA, MCGA and VGA (VGA highly recommended).
Sound support: Sound Blaster Pro, Adlib Gold

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SO WAS ARNOLD.
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MEGATECH

CD ODD

Brian Walker on the wonderful and the frankly weird

Readers may have scoffed at my remarks concerning some of the more esoteric offerings on CD ROM in the last issue, but believe me, the mating habits of the spotted wombat of Mongolia represent just one tip of the great silver iceberg. The real question is: how did this strangeness start?

When CD ROM was first conceived, it was seen as a high tech storage device that would transcend the limitations of 1.4 meg floppy disks to provide a multimedia extravaganza. Somehow, it hasn't quite worked out that way, though the signs are that it still might. In the interim, however, CD ROM users can trawl through some of the most unusual programs in the known world.

Take **Virtual Valerie**, for example. According to Reactor Software, Val is not only 'your cybernetic fantasy,' she's 'System 7 compatible.' **Virtual Valerie: The Directors Cut** is an erotic interactive fantasy game from the same people that brought you **Spaceship Warlock** and like that product, will appear on the Mac first with the PC version to follow.

But why no 'Virtual Vic?' The standard answer to this question is that the marketplace determines output. The minute that women start clamouring that they want a cybernetic fantasy of their own, then doubtless one will appear. Or at least that's the standard defence to charges of sexism.

From cybernetics we move on to the more mundane world of bicycles. To a 'interactive computer voyage through the world of cycling,' in fact. **Greg LeMond's Bicycle Adventure** (also available in floppy form) arrives courtesy of Eden Interactive and covers the history of bike racing, mountain bikes, and touring. Moving pictures and sound combine to produce everything you wanted to know about cycling but were too downright embarassed to ask. But how many people have a CD ROM drive *and* are interested in bicycles? Could there be any less than the number interested in a CD ROM dominoes variant? This is the what **Pentaminoe** from Quanta Press offers.

Potheads! Acid freaks! Junkies! You are not forgotten. Providing that is, you can get it together (maaan) to install a CD ROM drive. The **Pharmacists Guide to Drugs** is, of course, aimed at the professional classes rather than those who use chemical substances for recreational purposes. This guide provides fresh information on all the top 200 drugs.

In the midst of products like these and offerings such as **HAM Radio** and the **Colossal Cookbook**, lurks what might be described as 'sensible software.' Not surprisingly, Microsoft look set to dominate this undeniably embryonic genre. Their **Cinemania** is one of the best CD products around. Just about everyone is interested in movies to some degree and **Cinemania** caters for them all, from the beginner to the buff. An extensive database of film credits, sound bites, and even movie clips make this an essential purchase for multimedia fans.

Virtual Val: System 7 compatible

'Roll Over Beethoven' wailed Chuck Berry, though it's doubtful whether old Gustav would suffer too many restless nights if he was to see Microsoft's **Multimedia Beethoven: The Ninth Symphony**. Excerpts from said symphony are combined with notes on the score, and an examination of Beethoven's life and the times in which he lived. A tutorial, useful for budding composers, is also provided.

So much then, for the minority interest that is sensible software. To wind up this brief survey, let us turn to a subject that has suffered severe neglect in the world of computers: cows. If last year was 'the year of the bug, this year could be 'the year of the cow.' Maxis have **Sim Farm** in the offing and now Quanta Press are to release their *second* program devoted to the habits of these hitherto deeply unfascinating animals. **The Tao of Cow** (aka **Good Girls**), is the eagerly waited follow-up to their big hit **About Cows**. This is *the* program for multimedia cow and cattle enthusiasts. And also a clear case of milking the bottle dry.❑

CD ROM '93

Your compact guide to the year

publisher	title	enhancements
Access	**Amazon**	FMV footage, full sound throughout
Activision	**Return to Zork**	Full motion video
Cyberdreams	**CyberRace**	Sound
Electronic Arts	**Gary Kasaparov's Gambit**	TBA
	Sherlock Holmes	Full speech throughout
ICOM	**The GGA Tour: Earth Invitational**	CD original
	Sherlock Holmes Consulting Detective III	CD original
Interplay	**Star Trek 25th**	Voices of Shatner and Nimoy
	Lord of the Rings	20 mins of Ralph Baskhi film, sound
	Sim City	Video clips of protesting citizens
	Omar Sharif on Bridge	Old smoothie chops offering advice
	Buzz Aldrin's Race into Space	To be decided
Lucasarts	**Indiana Jones and Fate of Atlantis**	Sound
	Day of the Tentacle	Sound
	Rebel Assault	CD original
Microprose	**Challenge of the 5 Realms**	Sound
	Dragonsfear	TBA
	Pirates Gold	TBA
	Return of the Phantom	TBA
	F-15 Strike Eagle III	Video footage and sound
NovaLogic	**Wolf Pack**	New animation, musical score
Origin	**Strike Commander**	Sound
Psygnosis	**Dracula**	CD original
	Microcosm	CD original
Quanta Press	**USA Wars: Civil War**	CD original
	inc Storm clouds Over Dixie	CD original
	World War II inc 'Blitz Quiz'	CD original
Reactor	**Space Warlock (DOS)**	CD original
	Screaming Metal (Mac)	CD original
Sierra On-Line	**King's Quest VII**	Sound
Software Sorcery	**Aegis**	CD original
	Dead Zone Jr	CD original
	Fantasy Fiefdom	CD original
Spectrum HoloByte	**Iron Helix**	CD original
Virgin Games	**Shuttle**	Full speech throughout
	Kyrandia	Full speech throughout
	Dune	15 mins of movie footage

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MINDCRAFT

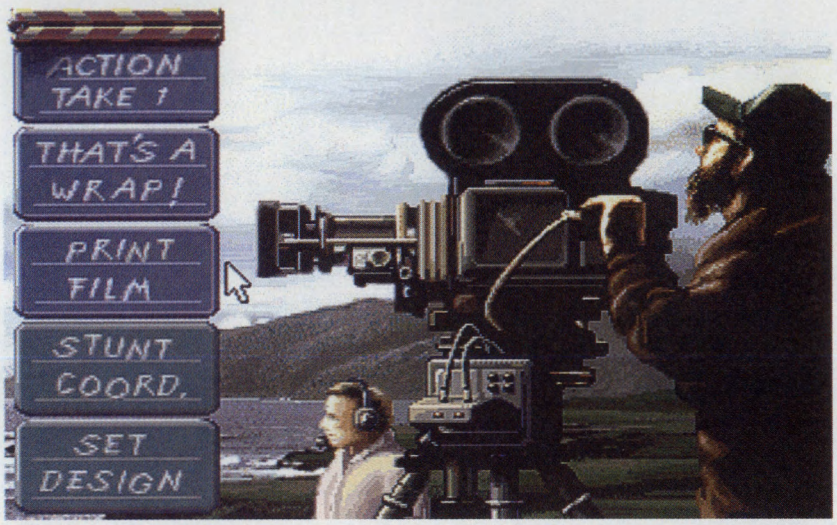
2291 205th Street, Suite 201, Torrance, CA 90501

Actual IBM VGA screen photos.

Reader Service No. 10

COMMANDER CRUNCH REPORTS FROM THE HANGAR

The commander visits Disney's Stunt Island. It's goofy, he concludes



Dare I do it? Categorize what the American market wants in flight sims? Well, what the heck, it's only one Martian's opinion.... let's put it simply: Americans like buttons and performance specs. Period. Give 'em a flight sim that involves little more than jerking around the joystick and you'll get stifled yawns (at least from the PC crowd - Performatively Correct, that is).

Give 'em a flight sim that's full of compliance with real-world performance data, lots of dials indicating various flight and weapons parameters, lots of controls to handle, lots of instruments to check out and manipulate in-flight, and they're in seventh heaven. Why? Perhaps it has to do with the PC itself and its main entertainment audience: people who've been hacking around on these things since the days of Northstar and Kaypro, and Osborne and Morrow Designs, people who like the challenge of complex systems, and the simulation of same, love to find a piece of software full of the illusion of a bank of mini-computers to operate.

There's no sin in this; it's fascinating to think about a computer system working to emulate the operation of a series of computer systems integrated around the representation of a real-world phenomenon as complex as air combat. Kind of a meta-computer model, or something like that.

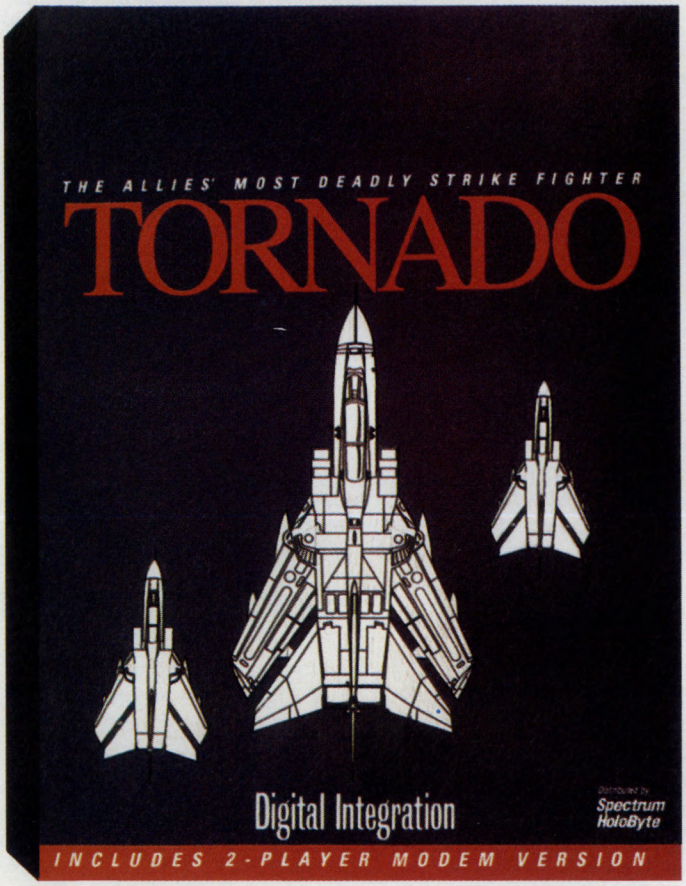
Oh well, enough seriousness, now on to some *real* fun! **Stunt Island**: if you haven't seen this one yet you're missing out on a real Wonder of the World (to borrow from **Civilization**). Sure, it's got incredibly glossy graphics (particularly in the modeling of the many included planes); sure, it's got detailed though sometimes unrealistic (big deal) flight performance modeling (try a barrel roll in a 747 sometime - impossible in the real world but this is fantasy, remember). All that, all the usual stuff. But what makes **Stunt Island** so special is - well, there are a bunch of things!

Most importantly, **Stunt Island** is probably *the* most professionally finished piece of entertainment software to be released ever, bar none. The manual is written in real English (with periods and proper use of the possessive and everything, what a joy!), and takes the player by the hand through the entire simulation and design system from start to finish, without ever being obscure or patronizing (**Falcon 3.0** does this too, these guys should team up).

The software is virtually bug-free, and makes use of a number of different

ALL FLIGHT SIMS ARE NOT CREATED EQUAL.

Some Are More Real Than Others



Real-world graphics.

Incredibly detailed mission planning.

Fly missions with up to five other Tornados.

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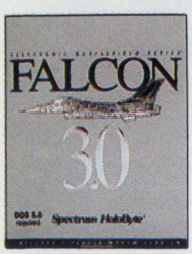

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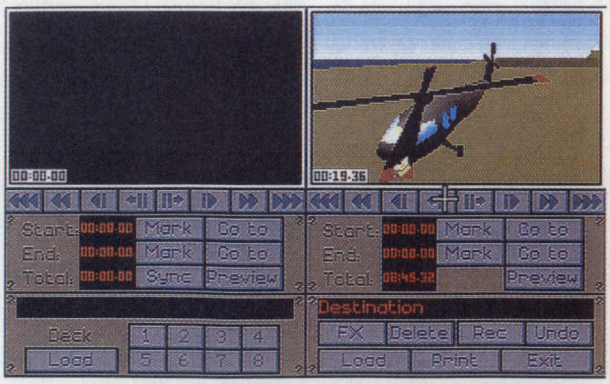

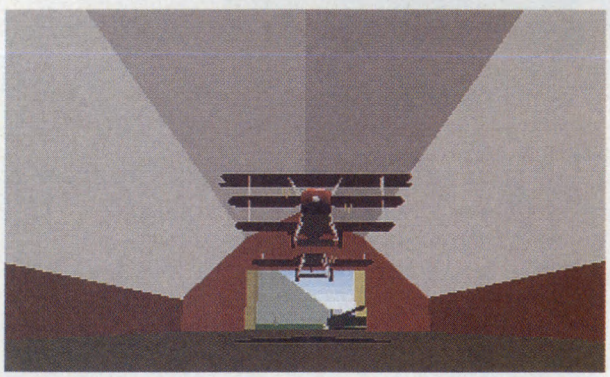

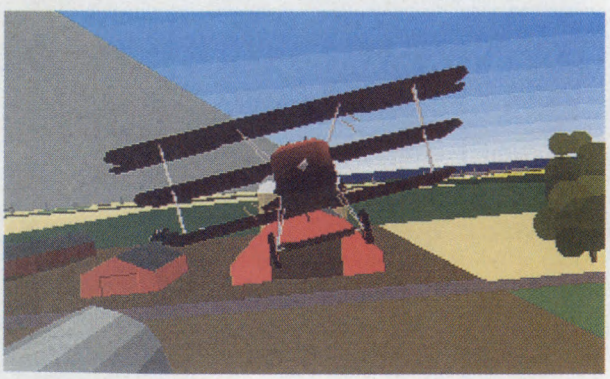

styles of software graphics and animation, demonstrating Disney Software's virtuosity with such computer design techniques. The digitized voice samples are professional-sounding, and thus persuasive. And finally, the *design* of the different aspects of this flight simulation cum animation studio cum film editing system is brilliantly simple, and thus endlessly fascinating.

What is **Stunt Island**, exactly? For once the box marketing hype gets it spot on by suggesting that it's more than just a flight simulator; it's really an exercise introducing the player into the range of techniques and skills needed to make movies. What? A home movie production studio from Disney? Are they trying to put themselves out of business?

Not at all! This is what's so wonderful about **Stunt Island**: for years most people have been at best witnesses to the multi-million-dollar activities of the select few in the movie industry (barring the odd video camera filming of a natural childbirth or use of excessive violence against the citizenry by its police forces). For years, most people have been trained into thinking of movies as something you go to see, not something you *do*.

Stunt Island changes all that. It gives anyone with a PC and sixty bucks or so access to the equivalent of a full home-grown film studio, complete with sets, props (called objects in the program), actors (called airplanes), and locations, and then provides all the info necessary in the manual and in the software design to give the player a fighting chance to actually pick up on a vast array of film-creating techniques. So, to put it simply, with **Stunt Island** you can make your own movies (and then give them to friends). Talk about encouraging creativity!

And the system really *does* encourage creativity. True, there are a bunch of already-created stunt clips and scenes, which can be played through like a series of flight simulation missions in a campaign (they're mostly pretty tricky, too). But that's only the front-end of the whole show, the attract mode.

Once hooked on the system, players can then get the little toesies wet by editing already-existing clips. And, ready to brave deeper waters, they can then plunge into the full-scale project of scouting out locations, arranging sets, locating and arranging props, staging stunts and timing actions, performing the stunts through to perfection and saving them to 'film,' and then editing them in detail to put together a full-scale final product.

As with any good game, achieving the goal is ultimately satisfying primarily because you've had such a great time along the way, not because you've reached the end (in other words, the final film product, evidence of much work and thought, is also a recollection of all the fun that went into making it).

The heart of **Stunt Island** is warm and friendly, too. Playing through the included stunts, if the player crashes or messes up, the results are either an amusing diagnosis by the Good Doctor (complete with fake German accent and glib bedside manner) or a rough-shod ribbing by The Boss ("Why don't you try something easier.... *like taking off?!?!*"). The manual is very careful and considerate of the player's attention, and explains everything in need of explanation to get things going on the production side. And, unlike almost all current air combat simulations, the fiction here is that the player is never *really* shoots anyone down or kills anything, but just performs stunts that *look* like that's happening. Again, a simulation of a simulated action. Very meta meta. And a refreshing change from the 'kill the world to save it' mentality inevitably behind most air combat simulations.

Perhaps what's most attractive about **Stunt Island**, though, is the complete lack of pressure in the overall design. There's been a term used to talk about assisting the human processing of information by breaking it down to manageable pieces (what used to be called paragraphs): chunking.

Stunt Island is *very* chunky; it lets the player work at whatever level of involvement is most comfortable and interesting, and then gently introduces the next level of complexity at the point where boredom's about to set in. This gives **Stunt Island** plenty of reach; like most air combat simulators or flight simulators, there's more packed into this one piece of software than is available in twenty in some other genres. And **Stunt Island** goes the mission-building aspect of some designs one step further, by giving the player some serious and professional design tools to operate with.

Which leads to the concluding statement here in today's World o' Crunch: Disney Software have been incredibly *generous* with the design and release of **Stunt Island**. Never in the history of mankind has so much been available for so little.

There, I've overstated the case a little (I like Shakespeare, too). But not much. Bye now.❑

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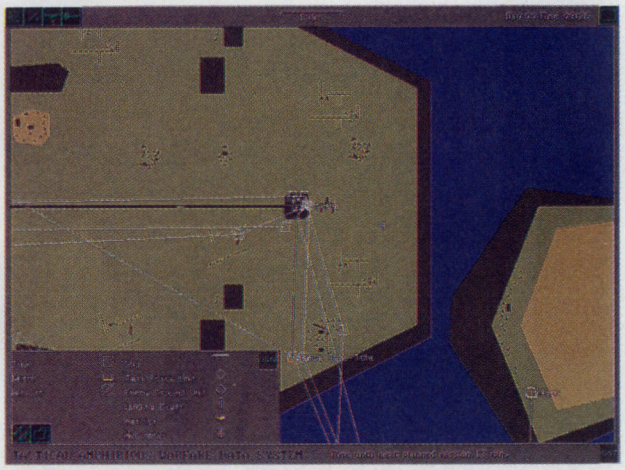
Reader Service No. 88

Jumping Jets!

It's the battle of the Harriers - Domark's AV8B vs Microprose's Jump Jet
Steve Wartofsky hops aboard

It's a rare opportunity to have two highly-detailed, highly-accurate simulations of the same airplane show at the same time. Rare because usually if there are a spate of releases on the same thing, one usually stands out as the obvious winner. An opportunity because, given the obvious care present in the design of both these sims, it becomes possible to compare them in terms of the way they sort out around the specifics of flight and weapons performance.



AV8B

Bane of Timor

Before getting into the comparison, though, let's take a careful look at what's on offer from each sim. Domark's **AV8B Assault Harrier** takes place in a naval task force off the coast of East Timor. The scenario envision's the player's participation in the defense of the East Timorese against an oppressive Indonesian military dictatorship that has been the bane of Timor since the '70s. A plausible, and sympathetic scenario.

The task force consists primarily of the light carrier Tarawa, the base of operations for the squadron of sixteen Harriers which the player is in charge of. Along with the Tarawa and its Harriers, there are other naval and land-combat forces present in the task force. Other ships provide sea-to-air strike capability, useful sometimes when the player is being harried during attempts to land. The Tarawa itself is also the source of marine ground forces, which are deployed in the battle plan in a timed, sequenced way to gain strategic territorial goals once air power has cleared the way for a subsequent ground assault.

The key overarching concept of **AV8B** is thus to marshall the combination of these ground, sea and air capabilities to conduct an effective, coordinated assault against the opponent. **AV8B** can in fact be played entirely as a wargame, without ever having to set foot in a Harrier, though doing so is unlikely to meet with much success (the computer-run Harrier missions tend to be nowhere near as effective as those conducted by the player).

The maps included with **AV8B** (both on-screen and in paper form) are to be applauded. Both are incredibly detailed and realistic depictions of the terrain of Timor, and provide a substantial amount of topographical and territorial information to the player. At a time when even most historical wargames are unwilling to go to this length, it is refreshing to see such an ample offering in a putative flight sim.

The on-screen map seems to be in an SVGA or higher-resolution VGA mode, and is quite readable, with myriad levels of zoom and effective mouse control (the on-screen map manipulation is a bit intimidating at first, but becomes quite manageable once familiarity with the system is achieved).

The map is used to work out the strategic battle plan for the entire campaign (one is included with the game for reference). The player sets up a series of timed missions, and attempts to schedule the progress of the campaign from reconnaissance to air strike to ground assault so that the least number of player losses is achieved.

It's certainly possible to just run the included campaign (Operation Saber) and fly the missions as they come up, but that's only doing justice to half the system. It's also possible to put together a battle plan that wins relatively easily, but it's another thing entirely to win without incurring significant air and ground losses.

The real challenge in the wargame aspect of **AV8B** lies in this last goal: set up a battleplan to achieve victory conditions (control over seventy percent or more of the territory) with the least number of losses possible. *This* ain't easy. The battle plan runs in real-time, and there are extensive options available both to gather intelligence on various locations as the campaign progresses, and to add additional missions (both ground and air) if they are deemed necessary as emendations to the original plan.

On to the flight sim aspect, though, the real basis for the concluding comparison. By any but the most blinkered and hardened standards based on experience with previous air combat software simulations, **AV8B** is an *incredibly* accurate simulation of Harrier flight and combat performance. Not so long ago, a few glimpses at multi-million dollar serious flight simulators produced memories of images not far different from those present in **AV8B**; very simply, it's that good.

And it's not just a question of graphics. The terrain and ground object representations in **AV8B** are as detailed as any flight sim fanatic might wish, but what really stands out is the

Harrier Assault

Designed by
Jonathan Newth, David Payne, Chris Tubbs

Published by
Domark

Systems
IBM PC

Graphics
VGA 256-color

Sound
PC, AdLib, Sound Blaster, Roland

Supports
Mouse, Keyboard, Joystick

smoothness and 'bounciness' of flight control. Using a joystick or Thrustmaster combo in particular, the Harrier in **AV8B** just *feels* incredibly good.

The forces of gravity are fully in effect, and produce things like inertia in turns, changes in velocity when climbing or diving, and limits in turning circle to satisfy everyone but the slide-rule set (for better performance specs, use a spreadsheet). Combine these gravity-induced phenomena with others having to do with airflow over wing surfaces and jet nozzle exhaust pressure, and there's plenty in the way of modeling to consider.

The Harrier is a very special jet in that it provides VSTOL (Vertical Short Take Off and Landing) capability, and goes one more: this jet can hover! Beyond that even, there's a flight technique called VIFFing (Vectoring in Forward Flight) that's unique to this airplane. It all derives from the jet's ability to vector its thrust, up to ninety degrees from horizontal. With increases in vertical vectoring of thrust, forward velocity is traded for downward velocity. Careful use of the vectoring during combat flight can provide options to make incredibly sharp turns or to come to a screeching virtual halt in the air, guaranteeing interesting new kinds of air combat maneuvers.

VSTOL and VIFF maneuvers are quite tricky, however, and here we get into the meat of **AV8B**. Landings on the tiny Tarawa flight deck are a real exercise in operating within rather unusual parameters, and VIFFing requires the utmost in concentration to manage optimally.

Put simply, one of the best parts of **AV8B** is the carrier landing experience. The player uses vectored thrust first to slow up, and then at a certain distance can convert the jet from forward flight to near-hover mode to make a very short, gentle landing. The trickiness in all this is that, in moving from forward flight to hover, side-to-side oscillations in the plane's performance increase markedly (something **AV8B** models marvelously well).

It's not simply a question of kicking rudder pedals (or keyboard keys or x-axis on the second joystick) over to line up; with each rudder kick at near-hover speeds, the plane rotates with quite a bit of inertia in the direction kicked. Correcting for and anticipating these inertial effects is perhaps one of the most fascinating challenges in the Harrier's VSTOL landings. More on this in a moment.

AV8B's air-to-ground weapons, HUD modes and radar screens are somewhat more simplified than those in, say, **F-15 Strike Eagle III**, but they all get the job done. The Hydra rockets seem almost universally the most effective weapons, but there are a vast array of air-to-ground weapons, both laser-guided and manual (Continuously Computed Impact Point, or CCIP mode, can be switched on or off on the HUD) to manage. Depending on the type of mission, a default load is put together for the player pilot, and it usually suffices (I always add more AIM-9s).

The combat challenge in **AV8B** is graduated, in the sense that more challenging opponents are set up west of the initial point of attack; the initial attack areas are patrolled by A4's, for instance, whereas Indonesian F-16's make a showing much later on and prove a good deal more difficult to dogfight with.

If **AV8B** has any weaknesses it's in the weapons and radar control arena; these aspects of performance are nowhere near as sophisticated in representation as other factors in the design, and could stand improvement if a sequel is in the works. Otherwise, it's a *brilliant* effort at designing a Harrier simulation that concentrates on those aspects of Harrier flight that distinguish it from the pack of sims already in existence. And the included wargame is nothing to sneeze at, either.

If **AV8B** is spectacular in terms of its campaign modeling and flight modeling, **Jump Jet** takes the Cake for its three-dimensional terrain modeling. This is *the* first simulation to provide subtle enough mountainous terrain to make use of for stealth attacks and terrain defense cover. It's no exaggeration to suggest that **Jump Jet**'s terrain graphics rival even those present in **Comanche: Maximum Overkill** (with the same caveats involving the need for a 486/33 or faster, ideally with local bus video slot, to handle the graphics crunch).

The terrain in the three included theatres (Hong Kong, Falkland Islands and NordKapp) is probably *the* most beautiful I've seen, and is a sheer delight just to fly over. Too bad there are them bad enemy units to pester the player while in tourist mode.

Kowloon at dusk

The campaign engine in **Jump Jet** is pretty straightforward, classic MicroProse style, which is nothing to complain about if the player's not looking for the combined arms approach provided by **AV8B** and, previously, **Falcon 3.0**. This is another 'single pilot against the world' situation, but that allows the player to concentrate on flying missions without having to worry about negotiating a complex strategic or operational or tactical system (different strokes for different folks, ooooh, shaa shaa...). It also allows MicroProse to include three very different campaign territories in great detail, and gives them a chance to further concentrate on the HUD, radar and weapons delivery detail that have always been the strong suits in MicroProse simulations. And nothing beats flying over Kowloon at dusk for sheer thrill factor.

Jump Jet stands out not only because of its sheer prettiness, however; it is just as detailed as **AV8B** in flight performance and VSTOL modeling, and provides very accurate air-to-ground delivery techniques for the Harrier's characteristic payloads, providing a range of different radar and HUD modes a lá **F-15 Strike Eagle III**.

Perhaps most importantly, because **Jump Jet** provides real mountains that would make any topo map proud, and

AV8B

Jump Jet

Designed by
Amanda Roberts, Jacqueline Govier, Adrian Scotney, Neil Coxhead, Martin Calvert, Kristian Ramsey-Jones, Mike Brunton

Published by
MicroProse

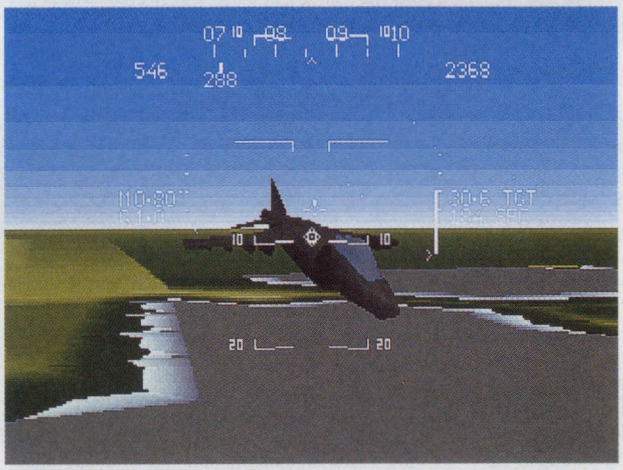
Systems
IBM PC

Graphics
VGA/MCGA 256-color

Sound
PC Speaker, Adlib, Sound Blaster, Roland

Supports
Mouse, Keyboard, Joystick

Notes
386 or faster CPU recommended.



Jump Jet (above)

real valleys, and real riverbeds, in full three-dimensional detail, an entirely different kind of air combat performance is possible. It's utterly thrilling to stay low (below five hundred feet) and then do some mountain climbing in a Harrier, trying to maintain terrain-hugging altitudes the whole time, to stay in a defensive posture. The plane can literally be flown up the side of a steep mountain, three hundred feet from the ground the whole way. And then, cresting the mountain without suddenly gaining another two thousand feet and signaling to all and sundry for a hundred miles, 'howdy!! I'm here!!' -- well, it's simply breathtaking.

Concomitantly, diving *down* the side of a mountain, or plateau rim, or into a valley, or between peaks into a narrow pass, is all terrifyingly possible with **Jump Jet**. The tension of performing such maneuvers with a couple of opponents waiting for just one false move, with SAMs flying from every direction, and two waypoints still to go, and no clear idea what might be over the next horizon (more SAMs! more Jians!) is about as much as I can take.

This is about as exciting as it can get on a computer, and has pretty much destroyed any residual envy I might ever have had for anyone with their own private Lear jet. People pass me poking along in my old heap in their BMW 733i's, and my only reaction now is, 'not bad, but it's not a Harrier.' Amazing what a good simulation can do for your life.

Okay, time to move into comparison mode: approaching a VSTOL landing, the following parameters hold true for *both* **AV8B** and Microprose UK's new Harrier simulation, **Jump Jet**. About six miles out, the Harrier should be put into vectored thrust mode, with about forty degrees from horizontal vectoring on the nozzles. Engine RPMs should be at about seventy percent at this point, and flight speed at about 120-130mph (here's a point where the two sims diverge slightly; **AV8B** tends to hold this approach with engines set to fifty-three percent RPM, whereas **Jump Jet** prefers seventy percent). The plane descends with anywhere from three to five degrees angle of attack on the wings, and should be descending from no more than about 700 feet up. Both sims provide solid info on angle of attack and descent rate, making precision maintenance of these parameters an easy thing to accomplish.

About three miles out, or less, perhaps, the thrust can be vectored to eighty degrees from horizontal (i.e. virtually straight down). The plane will slow from 120-130mph to 60-70mph and keep slowing, gradually moving into a hover. Note that with both sims, if this is attempted without dumping any remaining air-to-ground weapons, hover is unlikely to be maintained even at full thrust. A little oops that's usually discovered too late (in the sims, at least).

VSTOL symbology

The nice thing about **AV8B**'s transition to hover is that the HUD velocity vector symbolic representation changes automatically, to give the player a clearer indication of indicated flight path and of the moment of transition. In **Jump Jet** the VSTOL symbology can be specifically selected prior to landing, and provides a different but similarly effective means of representing the flight performance of the Harrier at slow, near-hover and hover speeds (in both cases the important new information is the roll oscillation, indicated in both sims).

With luck, the player will have lined up correctly enough from far enough out that only small further corrections will be necessary as final landing approach is achieved. If the Harrier is off-angle in any way, it's a simple task to power up and go around for another approach (with **Jump Jet** it's possible to dump fuel in increments to increase the viability of a hover landing, but too much fuel dumped means no chance for a go-around, careful with that one).

Trying to swing the Harrier into proper line-up from one mile out flying at 25 knots with full thrust and eighty degree thrust vector is not advised; kicking the rudder too hard will flip the whole show over (modeled nicely in both sims, I've got pix to prove it). Kicking it too little will land the pilot in the drink, in the trees, on top of the hamburger stand, or wherever else is nearby (but not on) the runway/deck. This is just one example of a set circumstance where both **AV8B** and **Jump Jet** perform almost identically.

The conclusion to be drawn is that either both the Domark and MicroProse team have been sharing the same pints at the local pub (highly unlikely); or that they have conspired to fob off totally unrealistic performance representation on the craven masses (even more unlikely); or that they've both hit upon the most realistic representation of an advanced jet simulation yet to show in software, and have independently come up with flight performance parameters that, because they are so similar, suggest they're completely spot on (absolutely likely).❑

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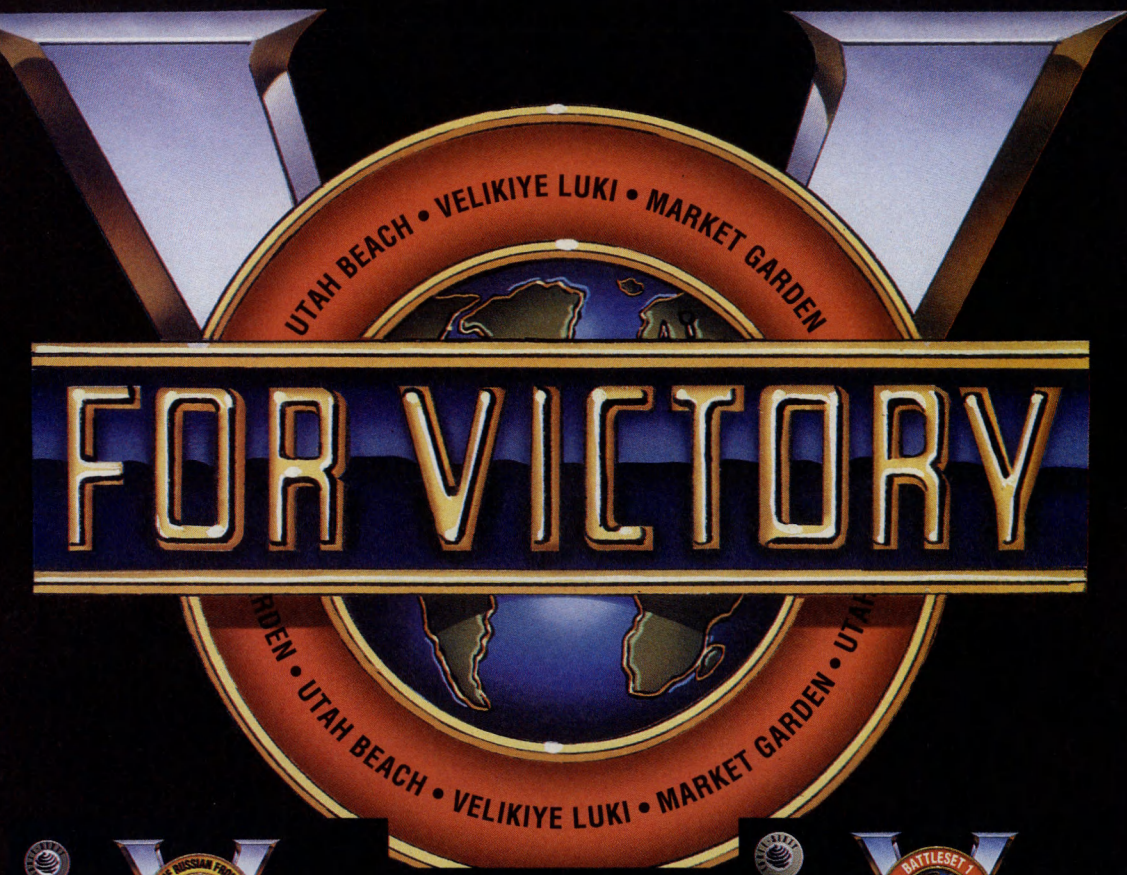

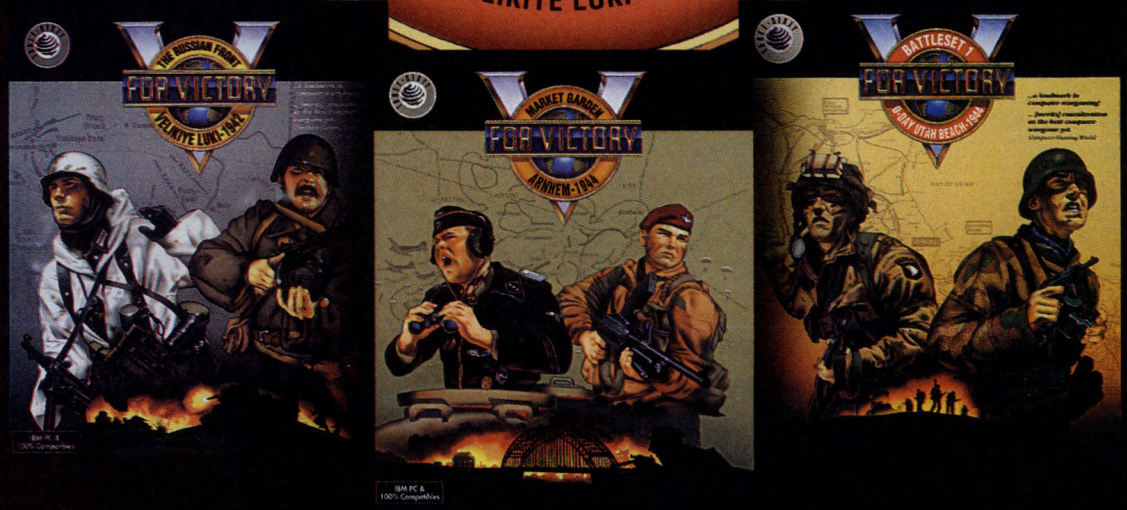

WARGAMING WITHOUT COMPROMISE

Strategy Plus Game of the Year - V FOR VICTORY: UTAH BEACH

Reader Service No. 65

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Two's Company

Curtis Suddarth looks at the on-line networks

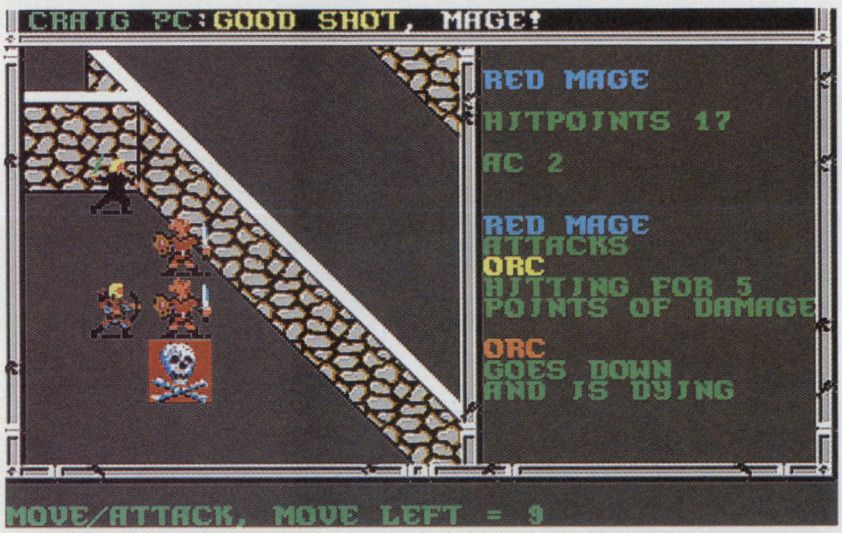
Before looking at on what the various bulletin boards offer, there are a few points to be aware of concerning on-line gaming. Most services offer some sort of introductory package, with either free or reduced cost access time. After the introductory period, continued usage will be at normal rates. Users in major cities usually have a local access number for toll free calling. Those in more sparsely populated areas may have long distance charges as well as on-line fees. Some services offer an 800 number for a surcharge which is usually less than long distance charges.

Many services charge more (sometimes quite a bit more) for 9600 bps access, so check rates before using. Prime time usage of most networks invariably costs more also. Most games offered in flat fee packages are usually text or ASCII based games. Multi-player games usually have an additional hourly charge, so check the rates before signing on to prevent surprises.

Never give account passwords to anyone, even to someone claiming to be from a service. Never give the password to anyone on-line. Access to accounts with the proper password makes the account owner liable for all charges incurred. If using a service in a setting where other people may have access to the computer, never install the account password in the software or communications script. Better safe than sorry.

Payment method is usually by a major credit card, but direct billing to a checking account is available on an increasing number of services. Check with the service for details. Many services offer some sort of program to automate usage on that system. These are often available for an additional charge, but may recoup their cost many times over in on-line savings. Manuals are also available from on-line support services, again for a fee that is usually billed to the user's account.

Besides games, on-line services are great places to meet modem opponents and to get help on current game releases. Most services offer a type of gamer's forum for meeting other players, and usually have software libraries containing many games and help files for downloading. Many also offer a graphics-based front end package for certain on-line games that can be downloaded and used for accessing those games. Most networks also offer a myriad of other services besides games, so check out their full range. Some information may have changed by the time this article was written so be sure to check before plunging into anything. Finally, a big thank you to all the people at the various services who helped me gather this information.



America On-Line: Neverwinter Nights

America On-Line

8619 Westwood Center Drive
Vienna, VA 22182
1-800-827-6364
1-703 448 8700

- **Rates**

Rates for America On-Line fall into two categories, IBM and Mac. For IBM users, there is a flat monthly fee of $7.95 for 2 hours of usage. All other usage is charged at 10 cents a minute, or $6 an hour. There is no prime time surcharge.

Macintosh users are charged a monthly fee of $5.95 with one hour of access time. Additional non-prime time (6PM-6AM and weekends) access is charged $5 an hour. Prime time usage is billed at $10 an hour. Access rate is 2400 bps, with 9600 support due by February. with any rate changes to be announced then. There is currently a 20 cent communications surcharge in effect for users in Puerto Rico, Canada, and Hawaii.

Customer Service Representatives are knowledgeable and courteous. They will do their best to answer a question, or put a user in touch with the proper person knowledgeable on the subject. Software delivery occurs within five to 10 days after calling.

America On-Line is a graphics-based service. Movement on the system is as simple as pointing and clicking with a mouse. Many games are graphical also, with several being system specific.

- **Requirements**

Requires special access software, available for IBM and compatibles, Macintosh, and certain Apple systems.

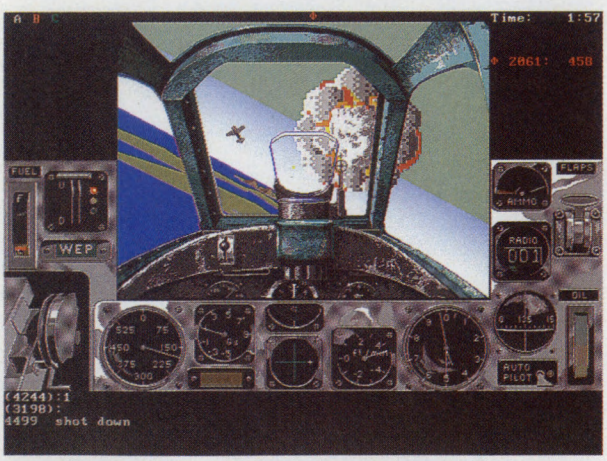
- **Warning!**

Users running Smart Drive in stealth mode face having this system gutted when attempting to log on. Contact the network before trying this.

TSN: adventures in Larryland

▪ **The Games**
Neverwinter Nights (reviewed issue 27)
Rabbit Jack Casino
Bulls and Bears Stock Game
Broderbund's Masterword
Games Parlor
Starfleet HQ
Parlor Ponderables
Lapub
People Connection
On-Line Trivia Games that constantly change with occasional prizes
Quantum Space
On-line Gaming Forum (OGF)

▪ **Comments**
America On-Line has one of the nicer interfaces of all the major services. Combine this with competitive pricing, and this system is hard to beat.



GENie: Air Warrior

GEnie

P.O. Box 6403
Rockville, MD 20850-1785
1-800-638-9636
1-301-340-4000

▪ **Rates**
GEnie has three levels of membership available. The first is their GEnie* Basic Services program. A flat rate of $4.95 per month is charged for unlimited non-prime time access to basic services. The next subscription level is GEnie Value Services. This covers most of the software libraries, bulletin boards, and multi-player games. Charges are $6 per hour for 2400 bps modems during non-prime time hours. The third level, GEnie$ Professional Services, is mostly for people using the service to track investment portfolios, do stock transactions, etc.

These highly specialized services are available at variable hourly rates. GEnie's prime time rate in the US is $12.50 an hour. Readers using 9600 bps modems will be charged $18 per hour non-prime time and $30 per hour prime time, even accessing GEnie* Basic Services.

Foreign access is available in some countries. Readers should write to the above address or call for more information. Not all services are available in foreign countries, and some services may have additional charges if available at all.

▪ **Requirements**
Uses standard communications software. Terminal based system.

▪ **The Games - single player included in the GENie Basic pack**
Adventure 550
Original Adventure
Black Dragon
Castle Quest
Dor Sageth
Showbiz Quiz Trivia

▪ **Multi-player Games**
Stellar Warrior
Stellar Emperor (Windows graphic front end available)
Air Warrior (graphic front end available)
A-Maze-ing
RSCARDS (graphic front end available)
GemStone III (beta test front end available)
Orb Wars
Galaxy I
Federation II
Diplomacy
Dragon's Gate
Hundred Years War
Multi-Player Battle Tech (available to players in Beta test version)
Nightside Trivia
NTN trivia (graphic front end available)
QB1 (graphic front end available)

▪ **Comments**
Customer service is good, with only short waits. Reps seem knowledgeable about the system from use, rather than from training manuals. GEnie tries to handle any customer question as quickly as possible, and have an easy sign up procedure.

Users familiar with the system find it is quick and easy, but newcomers may be a bit baffled in how to get around. Remembering the commands can take some time, but a guide is available that lists the commands and another contains a chart and a list of keywords for navigating the system. A front end, called Aladdin, is available for IBM compatible PC owners, Atari ST owners, and Commodore Amiga users which can automate many tasks. A Mac version is currently in development.

The Sierra Network

P.O. Box 1550
41486 Old Barn Way
Oakhurst, CA 93644
1-800-SIERRA-1
1-209-642-0700
1-209-642-0888 FAX

▪ **Rates**
A flat monthly fee of $12.95 is charged for 30 hours of non-prime time using TSN's Constant Companion area. An additional $2.00 is charged for each additional hour. A charge of $4 each allows access to SierraLand, LarryLand, and MedievaLand. $2 is charged for Sierra Stamps, an unlimited E-mail send option. Prime time usage is $7.00 an hour. Special packages are available for increased usage time. Call for current pricing. 6pm-7am Monday-Friday are non-prime time hours, as well as Saturday, Sunday and US holidays.

Local access numbers are available for most major cities, with no foreign access nodes. 9600 bps numbers are available, but the system is currently running at 2400 only. There is no additional charge for 9600 access.

▪ **The Games**
Go
Flip-flop
Bridge
Cribbage
Hearts
Checkers
Backgammon
Chess
Multi-Player Red Baron
Paintball
Boogers
Miniature Golf
Graffiti
Sneak Attack
Rocket Quiz
Casino
Liars Poker
Poker
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** THE MOST discounts apply to intra-state calls only where authorized.

Blackjack
The Shadow of Yserbius (reviewed issue 28)

- **Requirements**

Needs special software available from Sierra

- **Comments**

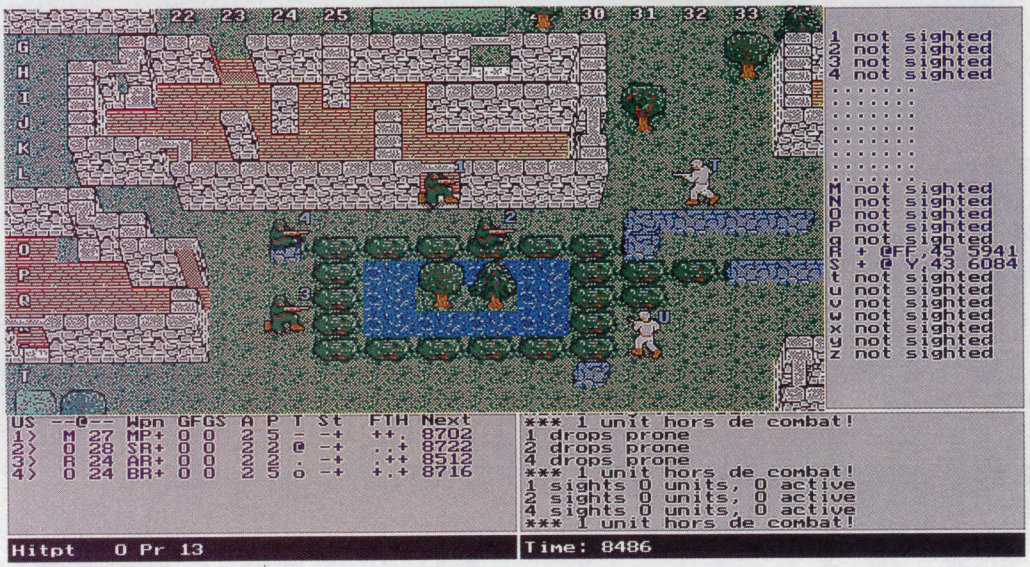
MedievaLand is the newest offering featuring an on-line multi-player graphic-based fantasy role playing game. **The Shadow of Yserbius** is the only current offering, but arguably the best game on TSN.

Larryland is the adult section. There are Restricted and Unrestricted areas. In the Unrestricted area, adult language and subject matter may be discussed openly. Restricted areas follow the normal rules of the other areas of TSN. A special password can be used to prevent access by children. A form with an adult signature needs to be returned to enable access.

Customer Service people are friendly and knowledgeable. Many can be found on-line at different times. One Customer Rep I talked with has logged almost 100 hours in one month! Technical support personnel go the extra step, including helpful suggestions on how to get the most from the software and how to avoid potential hardware problems. Most know the system from thorough use.

Sierra On-Line has launched a graphic-based service dedicated solely to games. While initial offerings were slim, the company has greatly expanded the number of products currently offered, and membership is growing rapidly. The Sierra name is associated with quality products, and their on-line system carries the tradition forward in grand style. A mouse click can access any feature available, or pop up a context sensitive help box. New users are immediately up and running, and no manual is really needed. TSN is organized into several lands located on the ImagiNation map (the opening screen of the software).

The Constant Companion is accessed through the Clubhouse. Popular card and board games available. A unique on-line persona, including skill levels, is created for communicating with other gamers.



CompuServe: Sniper

CompuServe

PO Box 20212
5000 Arlington Centre Blvd
Columbus OH 43220
1-800-848-8990
1-617-457-8650

- **Rates**

Compuserve has several subscription plans. The Standard Pricing Plan charges a flat rate of $7.95 a month for unlimited access to a variety of basic services. All other services are charged by usage. The Alternative Pricing Plan is a $2.00 monthly membership support fee that allows free access to membership support services. All other connect time charges are at the standard rate. There is also an Executive Service Option available which gives volume discounts on information retrieval on certain services, additional on-line storage, etc. . . , for a $10.00 monthly fee.

Extended services are billed at $12.80 an hour for 2400 bps. 9600 access is currently $22.80 an hour. Other services may also have a premium surcharge besides standard charges. In addition, there may be communications surcharges depending on how a user connects to CompuServe.

CompuServe has a wide selection of access numbers and systems available. An 800 number is available for users who do not have access to local numbers. There is a charge of $8.70 an hour for up to 2400 bps access, with a 9600 number available for a little more.

CompuServe is one of the oldest and largest of the on-line services. There are several programs available to help with logging on and maneuvering on the system. CompuServe puts out an IBM or compatible front end called CompuServe Information Manager (CIM). A Mac front end called CompuServe Navigator is also available. In addition, a Windows version of CIM is to be released soon (In Beta testing currently). There are also a wide variety of other products available from private developers to help manage on-line chores. Tech support can often be slow in coming for CompuServe's own software such as CIM.

- **Requirements**

Uses standard communications software. Terminal based service.

- **The Games (free)**

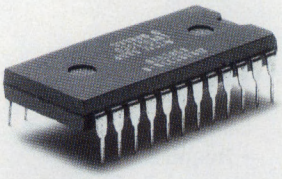
Black Dragon
CastleQuest
Classic Adventure
Enhanced Adventure
Hangman
Science Trivia Quiz
ShowBizQuiz
The Grolier Whiz Quiz

- **The Games (surcharge)**

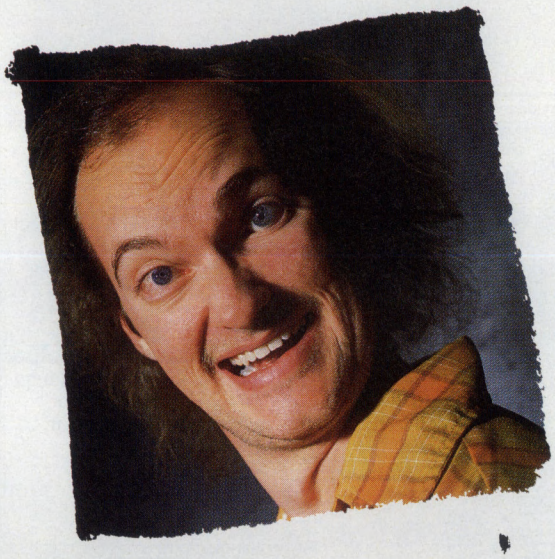
Air Traffic Controller
British Legend
Island Of Kesmai
MegaWars I
MegaWars III
Sniper! (graphic front end)
The Multiple Choice
Chess (graphic front end)
Star Sprint (graphic front end)
Checkers (graphic front end)
Backgammon (graphic front end)
Stage II
You Guessed It!

- **Comments**

Readers interested in finding players for modem games such as **Command HQ** and **The Perfect General** will find CompuServe an excellent resource. In the Modem Games Forum players can find worldwide opponents and hook up directly through CompuServe if using a



THIS OPPONENT IS PROGRAMMED TO BE CHALLENGING.



this one wants to rip your lungs out.

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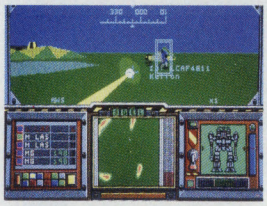

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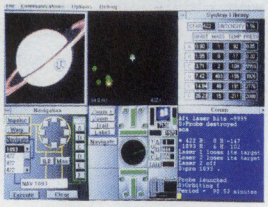

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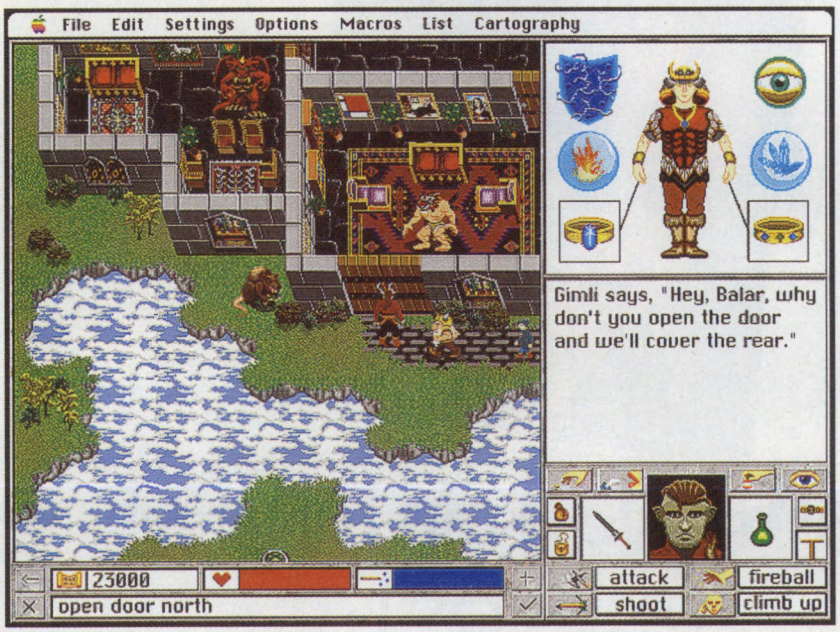
supported game, and never have to give out their home number or pay exorbitant long distance charges if using a local access number.

The Gamers Forum and the Game Publishers Forum as well as offering information and tips on new releases, also have the latest upgrades available for downloading. All together an excellent service, especially for the professional user.

Delphi

General Videotex Corporation
1030 Massachusetts Ave
Cambridge, MA 02138
1-800-695-4005
1-617 491 3393



MPG-NET:The Kingdom of Drakkar

- **The Rates**

Delphi offers two rate plans. The first is the 10/4 plan that offers 4 hours of usage for $10.00, with each additional hour costing $4.00 for non-prime time use. The second plan is called the 20/20 Advantage Plan.

The monthly fee is $20.00 for 20 hours of non-prime time access. Each additional hour carries the rate of $1.80. There is a one-time setup fee of $19 to start this plan. There is a $9/hour daytime surcharge for access during business hours via SprintNet or Tymnet. There are also surcharges on access from Alaska, Hawaii, and other countries.

There are local access numbers available for most major cities. Foreign users should call or write for more information. As of December, there was no 800 access number, though a customer representative told me that it was currently under consideration.

- **Requirements**

Uses standard communications software. Terminal based service.

- **The Games**

Colossal Caves
Dungeons
Quest
Board Logic
Aliens
Flip It
Othello
Lunar Lander
Reverse
Super Wumpus
Wumpus
Poker Showdown
Scramble
Stellar Conquest
TQ Trivia Tournament
Modem to Modem

- **Comments**

Currently there are no front ends available to ease navigation of the system, but a front end is in development for IBM and compatible systems. Delphi can be a bargain when comparing rates with the other information systems. The 20/20 Advantage Plan can save a lot on on-line charges.

Digital Dreams Network

Tel 800 825 8852

- **The Rates**

$6 an hour

- **The Game**

Legends of Future Past (reviewed issue 29)

- **Requirements**

Terminal based, supports most platforms

- **Comments**

Only one game on-line but at least it's a good one

The Multiplayer Games Network

PO Box 367
Pawling, NY 12564
Tel 800 245 0317

- **The Rates**

MPG-NET have completely revised their charges. Where before they had more plans than an architects office, they have reduced payment options to a flat $4 an hour fees. Users must log-on through a CompuServe node to gain throughput, but there will be no additional charges for doing so.

- **The Games**

The Kingdom of Drakkar (reviewed issue 27)
Empire Builder

- **Requirements**

Special software required. Supports IBM PC, Mac, and Amiga

- **Comments**

MPG-NET is the network of potential. Not much on-line at present, but with **Empire Builder** and **Operation Market** in the offing they'll have games to compete with the best. Excellent full color graphics and the simplified payment plan should smooth their progress.

- **The Best...**

- Ease of Use: The Sierra Network (TSN)
- Best Modem Gaming Support: CompuServe
- Best Graphical Front End: America On-Line
- Best Value: Delphi for Information Services, MPG Net or TSN for Games
- Most Features: CompuServe or GEnie
- Best Children's Features: The PRODIGY Service or TSN
- Best Overall Game Selection: GENie
- Best Overall Game: **The Shadow of Yserbius** on TSN
- Best Customer Support: The Sierra Network
- Best Games Chat: GENie ❑

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The streamlined interface with the new ALL ATTACK button gives you the smoother moves you'll need to survive in combat.

Eye III is an assault on your senses, with three times more cinematic intermissions and five fully-scored music pieces. Plus the ability to import your favorite characters from Eye II, along with weapons, treasure and experience levels.

The way the developers of Eye III see it, if you're going to go out, you might as well go out in style. Who knows, 40-100 hours later, you might just see the light at the end of Eye III. Then again, you might not.

IBM

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IBM 256-color VGA displays

Women's Support

'Which way do the disks go in?' 'If I replace the CPU can I convert my PC into a Mac?' 'What, three pairs of shoes!' 'Will you marry me?' Marisa Ong of Spectrum HoloByte hears them all. Brian Walker listens in

It's a known fact that comparatively few women play computer games, so it's not entirely surprising is just how few women there are in the games industry that function on anything other than a PR/marketing level. But when this situation is compared with say, IBM, where approximately 40% of the programmers are women, or to computer science graduates where the figure is even higher, and it becomes enough to raise even the most static of eyebrows. One figure right at home, however, in this male dominated world is Marisa Ong, customer support operative at Spectrum HoloByte. Ms Ong joined the company in 1986 when they were located in Boulder, Colorado.

'I started playing games when I was at Stanford University in 1983 and got seriously addicted to games like **Rogue** and **Hacker**' she explains, 'but when I when I left college I never thought any more about them. After leaving Stanford I moved to Boulder, Colorado, to be with my boyfriend.

'I spent the first few months looking for a job. I actually got work as an administrative assistant in a jewellery boutique, but I was bored out of my mind. If there isn't a crisis or a deadline, I tend to fall asleep mentally.

'I saw an article in the local newspaper about this new computer game company called Spectrum HoloByte, who at that time were based in Boulder. I rang them up immediately, but the only vacancy they had was as a receptionist, a job they considered me over-qualified for. They said to keep in touch so I called them again in couple of months, and by that time a position in customer support had opened up.'

The first game on which she was put to the test was **Falcon**, a plane which, in its various incarnations, was to become a major part of her life. 'I was extremely nervous at that time and terrified of making some huge *faux pas*' she confesses. When the company moved back to the Bay Area, Ong was only too happy to return to the comparative warmth of Northern California - a warm weather person she.

At this point in the conversation, it's probably time to get the obvious question out of the way: what's it like being a female answering technical questions to an audience that is 99.9% male? 'Most guys are real good about it' she says, 'but there's always the die-hards. Of course, they never actually say

Marisa Ong ponders what to shoot next

that they don't want to talk to a woman, instead, the conversation goes something usually goes something like this:'

'Hallo, is that reception?'
'No, this is customer support.'
'I need to speak to someone about a problem with **Falcon 3.0.**'
'Sure, go ahead.'
'Oh, er, could you put me through to *senior* customer support?'

'After I've eventually convinced them that I do know what I'm talking about and answered their question, there's often a bashful sounding 'thank you' followed by a rapid hang-up.' But do you get calls from women? 'Oh, sure, but they are

usually from girlfriends or bosses who get their secretaries to call. This creates all kinds of problems as I usually have to ask them about system configurations, and they have no idea what I'm talking about.'

In the midst of all the chat about ailerons and G-forces, the job is not without its lighter moments, as Ong recounts: 'One guy called and said how nice it was to talk to a woman about computer games as his girlfriend hated them. But he still couldn't quite believe it...'

'I guess you play games because it's your job?'
'No, I actually like playing games.'
'You must like shopping?
'No, as a matter of fact I hate shopping.'
'I bet you've got twenty pairs of shoes.'
'No, I have about three pairs.'
'C'mon, three pairs of shoes? You've gotta be kidding!'
'I have three pairs of shoes.'
(pause)
'Will you marry me?'

'There was also the time when we looking for beta testers for **Falcon 3.0**. This guy called and said he had a business in Hong Kong, and that if I gave him the job he would give me a silk kimono.' (He didn't get the job).

'You get the other extreme, too. This guy comes on and says his wife does nothing but play **Tetris**. He complains that he can't get any dinner and the cleaning never gets done because his wife is always playing **Tetris**. But what really drives him crazy is that she gets better scores in the game than he does. That, he really can't stand.

'Of course you get some pretty silly questions, too. I spent half an hour once with this woman and was unable to help her at all. She called back an hour later to say that she had figured out the problem: she was putting the disks in upside-down. I also had a guy who wanted to know why he couldn't convert an IBM to a Mac if he replaced the CPU.'

Ong's own tastes in gaming are fairly wide although she confesses to being partial to 'shooting things out of the sky.' 'What I don't like,' she says, 'are these games where you have to rescue a princess, or like in Microprose's **Pirates**, where you have to marry the princess.' But aren't these games simply a representation of reality? 'No, they're more a representation of what men like to think of as reality.'

Despite such proclamations, Ong does not see herself as feminist. 'For one thing, I really like men and if you say you are a feminist that is often interpreted as being anti-men. I also don't want to get saddled with all that ideological baggage,' she adds.

On the networks where Ms Ong spends much of her time fielding technical questions, she uses the handle 'No 19.' Is this to disguise gender? I asked her. 'Sort of, sort of not, 'she replied. 'I was a big fan of *The Prisoner* TV series so it's a kind of homage to that. In fact, one of my big ambitions is to visit Portmeirion' (the Welsh village where the series was filmed). The eponymous captive's struggle for identity is not entirely unlike Ong's own quest in a male dominated world, but a prisoner of gender she most certainly isn't.❑

GO

The Board game of **GO** is savored by over twenty-five million players, who treat it as both an enjoyable recreation and a serious exercise in logic and philosphy.

GO can be learned in minutes and is taught in elementary schools in Japan. However, expect to spend the rest of your life mastering this incredable game.

GO is played by two oponents who alternate play black or white stones on the vacant intersections of a grid attempting to surround empty points while also thwarting one another.

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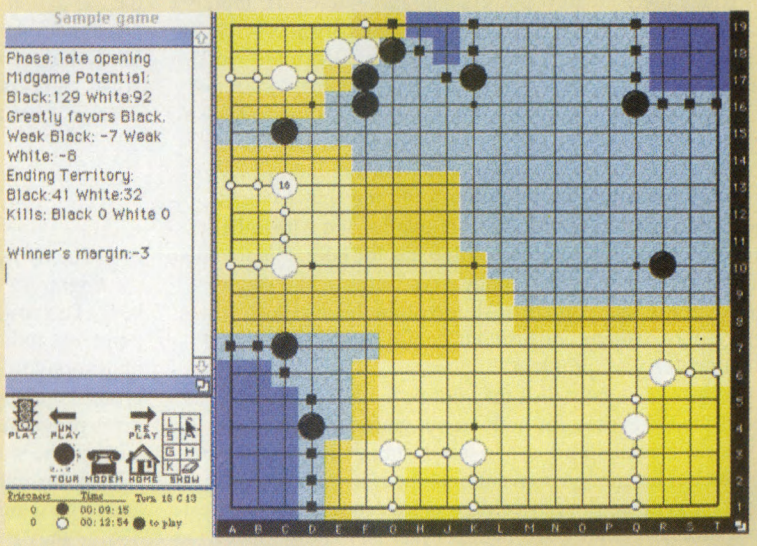

NEMESIS Deluxe combines GO Master (basic GO player and teacher) with Joseki Genius (corner openings) and Tactical Wizard (life and death analyzer) and Scribbler (game editor/annotator) for the most complete GO teacher available.

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Reader Service No. 66

The Hard Stuff

Recollect, if you will, the days when you conquered the mighty beast of RAM, launched those crazy TSRs, and mastered the frightening Config Sys. Judith Weller says memories are made of this.

Memory - My new PC has 4 MB of memory on it, why isn't that enough to run Mega-game which says it only required 640K. How many times is this complaint being heard from gamers? That 4MB of memory doesn't refer to DOS conventional memory which is only 640K no matter how much is installed on the system. Players will only get mega-game to run if they are willing to spend a lot time fiddling with Config.Sys and Autoexec.Bat. Even then there may still be problems if all the device drivers can't be loaded into upper memory - the memory which exists between 640K and 1Mb.

One alternative is to buy a software package which will automate memory allocation. But not all games co-exist happily with memory managers! Often there are notices from game company on-line reps who say that this game will not run with this memory manager. Or, 'we do not test our games with this memory manager.'

Hacking it

In a bygone age game players were as much hackers as anything else. They knew the inner workings of the PC and viewed the installation and running of large games as a challenge to their technical knowledge. Of course, in those days, large game were pretty small by today's standards so the challenges were rather limited.

Today there are new players who has entered the market place: the non-technical players. The new kids wants to install the game and play it, and not to have explore the inner workings a PC to do so. They are used to 'plug and play' systems.

As a consequence of this, some users are going to have a very hard time getting these big mega-games to play. At the most they expect to run an install program and then sit down to enjoy playing the game. But that's not the way it works today. Tech support phone lines are overloaded with callers and on-line services are filled with pleas for help. Complaints echo round the land of how many days were spent trying to get through to Tech Support. All too often the answer given is 'make a boot diskette' or 'use our boot-diskette maker' and that will solve your problem.

Soon, even a boot disk may not be a viable solution. Even if the PC is used for nothing but games, or the user activates a special config.sys to use during game play, there still may not be enough conventional memory free for a very big game. With all the device drivers loaded to play the latest games - things get crowded in upper memory and some device drives, even when specified DEVICEHIGH, will end up in conventional memory due to lack of upper memory space.

Certainly one of the things that needs to happen is user education. Both game companies and game magazines can play a role here. A company who releases a game which demands extensive use of a PC's memory capacity, needs to provide more technical instructions for the user. Many users do *not* want to make a boot disk. Consequently it would help if companies would include sample CONFIG.SYS and AUTOEXEC.BAT in the technical supplement for the game. Game magazines need to run technical tips either of a generic nature, or for specific games.

Many magazines are running hardware reviews, but a hardware review is not very practical or useful if the majority of readers are having trouble getting games installed and running. I think that to help the user some standardization is in order.

The average user can usually get between 585,000 - 595,000 bytes free. The game companies need to be setting a standard which does not demand so much conventional memory to be free.

I'm not proposing that all games be written as if they were going to to be played on an XT with 512K. I have no problems with a game using whatever resources are available - 486, co-processor, EMS, SVGA and as much of the base 640K as is available. What I think is wrong is a game which *insists* on an unreasonably large amount of that base being free from the start. Why not write the game so that it limits the use of conventional memory to say 585,000 bytes and then takes the rest of the memory required from either EMS or XMS. I agree that this will require a bigger programming effort, but certainly with the prices of games today the consumer has every right to expect this effort.

Design philosophy

The 640K limit is a real problem, but it didn't appear overnight, it's been there for a long time - since the PC was born. The point of this article is not to discuss this design point, but rather how to cope with it. A better design philosophy for game designers is to take advantage of the protected mode operation available in 386s and above. This gives programs the ability to address a flat memory model without the slow paging incurred by EMM386 and others. I realize this eliminates the users/owner of 286 PC's, but more and more games are specifically stating the requirement for a 386, or they run so badly on a 286 machine as to be almost unplayable.❑

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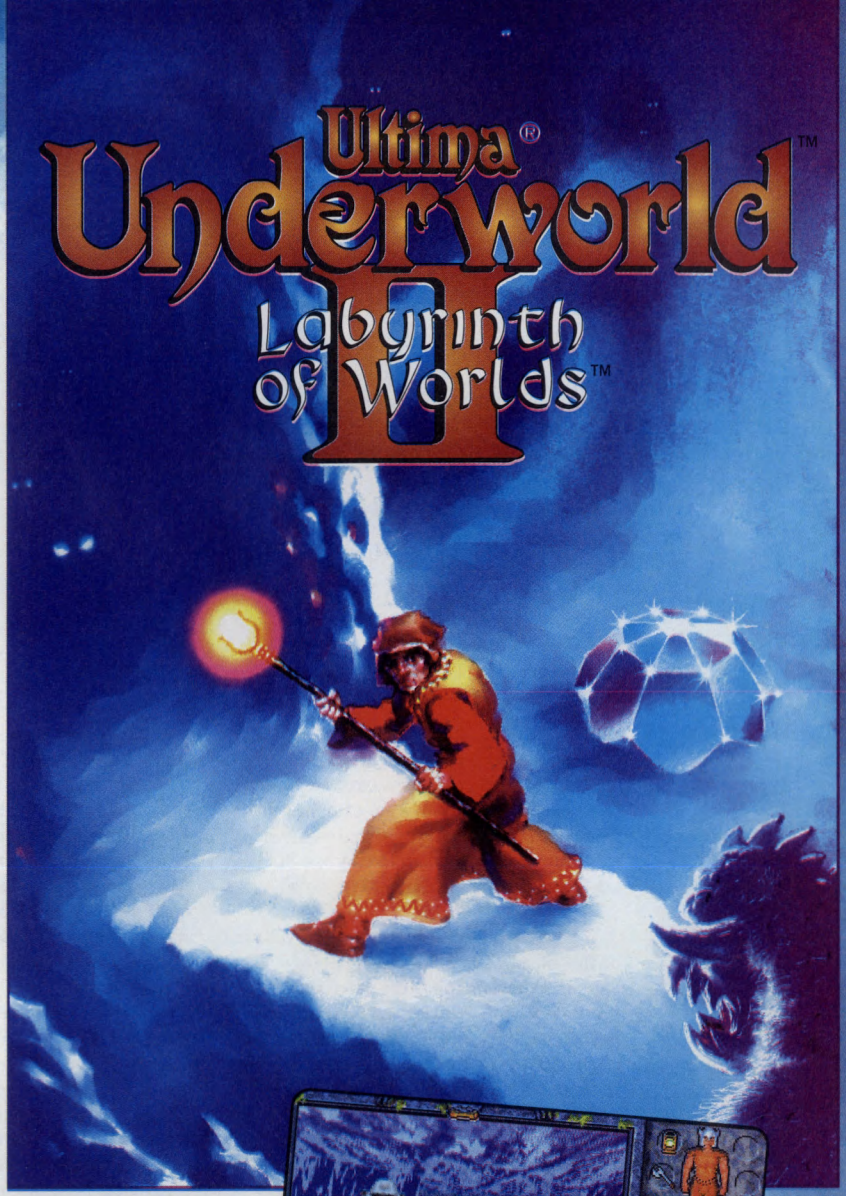

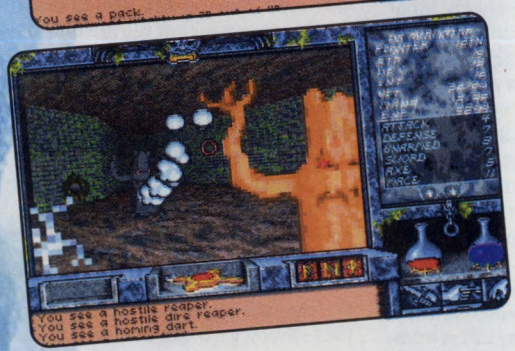

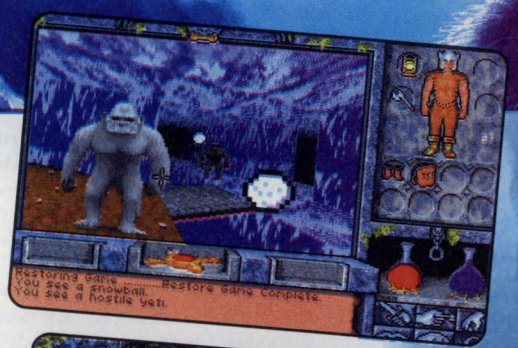

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Dear Judith

Memory problems? No magnetic appeal?
Or is it that you're just plum incompatible?
Auntie Judith Weller has all the answers

I have just purchased a brand new 486 PC with all the latest technology. I expected it to be a real screamer. However, I am extremely disappointed. Games which played fine on my old PC either run very poorly if at all on my new PC. Why am I having so much trouble?

Welcome! You have just found yourself on the 'bleeding edge' of PC technology. What you are experiencing is the price you pay for the 'latest and greatest' hardware technology. Remember, older games were not written for the new super fast PCs. In many cases the speed of the new machines is such that you will need some sort of 'slowdown' software utility to make certain older games playable. This is especially true of arcade games and flight simulators.

Even the latest games were written, tested and released before this new technology entered the market place. Several major companies are experiencing hardware compatibility problems with their new releases running on the latest hardware.

Game companies are as unhappy about this situation as you are. They are working with the various hardware vendors to find fixes for these problems.

But often it can take a very long time to sort through this sort of problem - especially if it is a question of BIOS 'bugs'. While it may be nice to have the latest model, it may not turn out to meet all your expectations in the short run.

When I go to buy a new PC what features should I be concerned about getting?

I think that the biggest thing to look for in a PC purchase (unless you are a hardware guru) is service and brand-name components. Be sure you fully understand the terms of the warranty offered. If possible see if they will offer on-site service for a little extra money. Believe me it is worth it! Also a 24 hour 800 number is *not* a substitute for a living, breathing technician. If a company believes that is service, they wouldn't get my money!

Another thing to consider is whether the company from which you are buying the PC has used brand-name components. Many of the smaller companies are little more than five guys working out of a garage. These outfits probably will not survive a major price war or shake-out in the industry. Your warranty on this no-name clone will be worthless if the company goes bankrupt. However, if the PC was put together with brand name parts, all is not lost. While you may not get a warranty honored, at least you can get the parts fix or replaced if they are made by brand-name manufacturers. Believe me it is easier to get the CPU chip replaced if it is made by Intel than if it's made by a firm whose phone has been disconnected!

You might want to think about PC insurance. There are now companies that offer insurance against hardware failures and work just like car insurance. It may not be a bad idea to consider an insurance policy for your PC unless you know a lot about installing, maintaining and diagnosing hardware problems.

I have heard various discussions pro and con on the use of caching writes? What are the problems associated with caching writes?

Most commercial caches and those shipped with operating systems have some form of delayed or buffered writes: ie the cache software waits for an 'idle' disk time before it does a write - holding the data in its buffer until an appropriate time. Some caches have write caching as a default - not very nice to do to the unwary user.

Only recently several major game companies have warned players that the use of a cache will result in damaged saved games. Not only can cached writes damage your saved game, it can also lead to lost allocation units on your hard drive. If you issued the CHKDSK /F command from the DOS prompt, the accompanying report will tell you how many, if any, lost allocation units are found. The only time I have ever had lost allocation units was while I was testing with cached-writes. Other people have reported a large number of lost allocating units when they are using cached writes.

There is no question that using write caching as well as read caching offers performance improvements. But ask yourself this. Are the few minutes saved here and there by cached writes worth the time spent if my saved games are damaged and I have to start the game over from the beginning?

What is the best Super Vga card to buy? How much memory should I have on it?

SVGA refers to screen resolutions and colors. Most games which are called SVGA are using the screen resolution of 640x480 with 256 colors. So keep in mind several things when you buy the new card. You need to buy a card which supports that screen reslution and that number of colors.

There are many cards available which support 640x480x256. But don't forget not only must your card be able to support that screen resolution, but the monitor must also support it. Sowhen you get ready to make that purchase, make sure you don't need to buy a new monitor. Check out the hardware manual that came with your monitor to find out what screen resolutions it supports.

Since many companies are only now releasing their first SVGA games, I would definetly try to buy one of the better known brand-name cards.

Most game companies will have tested their games under one of those cards, and the technology is still new enough that some games might have problems with lesser known makes of cards. Also if you need support it will be easier to get from a brand-name manufacturer.

As to how much memory should there be on the card, I wouldn't recommend having a card with less the 1Mb on it. However, if your finances won't permit that memory upgrade, then start out with 512K and make sure that there is room on the card for additional memory.

This will give you greatex flexibility and lessen the chance of instant obsolescence. But remember 512K is not enough memory to support even the higher resolution which can be found in some business applications, but it should be enough for your new SVGA games which runs in 640x480x256.❑

Got a problem? Then why not drop Agony Aunt Judith Weller a line c/o
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Reader Service No. 83

Sorry, but not really

I hereby offer a sincere apology for the offence which my dedication in **V For Victory: Velikiye Luki** caused some of your readers. My sole intention was to honor a personal friend who means a great deal to me. It was *not* intended to honor the cause for which he fought. I am capable of making that distinction. I now realize, with deep sadness, that some cannot do so, or will not.

The Third Reich was an evil, monstrous regime which had to be destroyed at terrible cost. Those who deny that, or choose to defend Nazi Germany today, can only do so out of ignorance, social maladaptation, or outright criminality. It distresses me greatly that some now believe I am in one or more of these groups, and that my simple gesture was so misunderstood.

I believe that war is evil, but that most warriors are not. This is exactly why I chose that specific photo of my friend Hans, holding his little sister. I wanted to humanize him for others, to show that enemies can still be human beings.

I also believe it is a grave injustice to think that everyone who wore a German uniform between 1933 and 1945 was a 'Nazi,' and was personally to blame for the horrors of Nazi Germany, or for all the evil they inescapably found themselves caught up in. For those who suffered a personal loss, there is no way I can change that, or set things right. But where does it end?

Virtually everyone who was alive during WWII suffered from it in some way. It has now been 48 years since the end of this war and only a few of us who lived through it are still alive. How much longer must we wait for all the suffering to be acknowledged, so the healing can be begin?

Ed Rains
Houston, TX 77058

The Wehrmacht uniform

In regards to R White's letter in issue 28 expressing his concern over **V For Victory: Velikiye Luki** being 'dedicated to a Nazi,' I wish to point out that not everyone who wore the Wehrmacht uniform was a member of the Nazi Party. The majority of soldiers in the German military were not members of the ruling party, just as most members of the Russian army were not in the Communist Party.

Condemning others for the color of their uniform, not the color of their personal beliefs leads to wars. Don't fall into that trap.

Kyle Caffey
LaPorte, CO 80535

Green blight

Thanks for great review of Microprose's **Greens** in issue 27. What a cop-out by your magazine. Since when is Stacker compatibility a requirement for programs? Boy, I'm sure glad Joe McCullough and Peter Szymonik have VESA compatible graphics cards or we may have never seen reviews of **Links 386 Pro** or **V For Victory** in your magazine.

I think your effort to provide a review of **Greens** was sub-standard and provided a disservice to your readers. In the future, when a particular game can't be reviewed due to an incompatibility problem, I hope you will give a second reviewer the opportunity to write the review.

Finally, why does my subscription copy of your magazine always appear in my mailbox two weeks after it hits the newsstand? Most of the other publications I receive arrive on or a few days after they hit the newsstand.

N Longardner
Gahanna, OH

*The Amiga version of **Greens** was reviewed in full in issue15. It is not general policy to review the same game twice, even when one appears on a new format. The PC version was due to get no more than a passing mention in The Sports Locker, a column conceived partly to fulfil this function. Unfortunately after trying 'fixes' from Microprose, the deadline was upon us leaving us no time to find a different writer.*

The US mail appears to have its own ideas on when subscription copies should be delivered. Vermont subscribers, for example, get their copies long before the mag shows on the newsstands. I understand that this has led to thousands of readers relocating to Vermont just to ensure that they get the mag on time. Perhaps this is the solution to your problem?

Out of control

I have recently discovered flight simulations for my PC and a world that will be a large part of my recreational activities for years to come. I'm hooked! In particular I enjoy **Aces of the Pacific** and **Red Baron** from Dynamix.

However, I'm writing this letter to express dissatisfaction with a problem or defect that I have encountered with other new flight simulators I have purchased. It appears programmers are cutting corners by omitting rudder control (Microprose's **F-15 SE III** and EA's **Heroes of the 357th**) or by allowing a choice of rudder or aileron control (Disney's **Stunt Island**). As a consumer who enjoys flight simulators I must say that I do not enjoy testing myself against the program with my rudder/aileron tied behind my back. In fairness to Microprose, they told me that they will be issuing a patch disk which will include rudder control.

A review in this magazine alerted me to the problem of no rudder control in **Heroes of the 357th**, and I chose not to purchase the game for that reason.

Dennis Whitmer
Golden, CO 80401

Red face

As someone who happens to be in that 99% of your magazine's readership who is fluent in Russian, I was truly astonished by your Russian translation (and spelling) of White Death on the Russian Front (issue 28). As it stands, the title does not make any sense. The proper heading should be:

БЕЛАЯ СМЕРТЬ НА РУССКОМ ФРОНТЕ

Other than that, your magazine is just about right.

Henry Poyker
Brooklyn NY 11220

Tsk, tsk. Typos typos.

Proof It

Whatever happened to:
1) The add-on disks for **Railroad Tycoon** mentioned in issue 1?
2) The conversion of **Deuteros** from the Amiga to the PC?
3) The release of **Pirates Gold** - it's been listed by your advertisers for months now?
4) The Amiga? No, don't answer that. I told Amiga users that their machine would follow the ST into decline for serious gaming. I'm just happy to be right. The smug gits deserve it!
5) Interesting letters in Rebound? Brian Uecker's in issue 27 looked hopeful but he managed to circumnavigate the entire English language without achieving coherence.
6) Most of all, whatever happened to your prufe reeder when you set sail for the New World?

Paul Bates
Derby
UK

1) Issue 1??? What kept you? Microprose canned them
2) It got lost in the confusion surrounding Activision's temporary demise
3) Coming soon
4)
5) The art of letter writing is dead. I blame computers
6) He dwroned

Have a go, Joe (and Joanna), by writing to:

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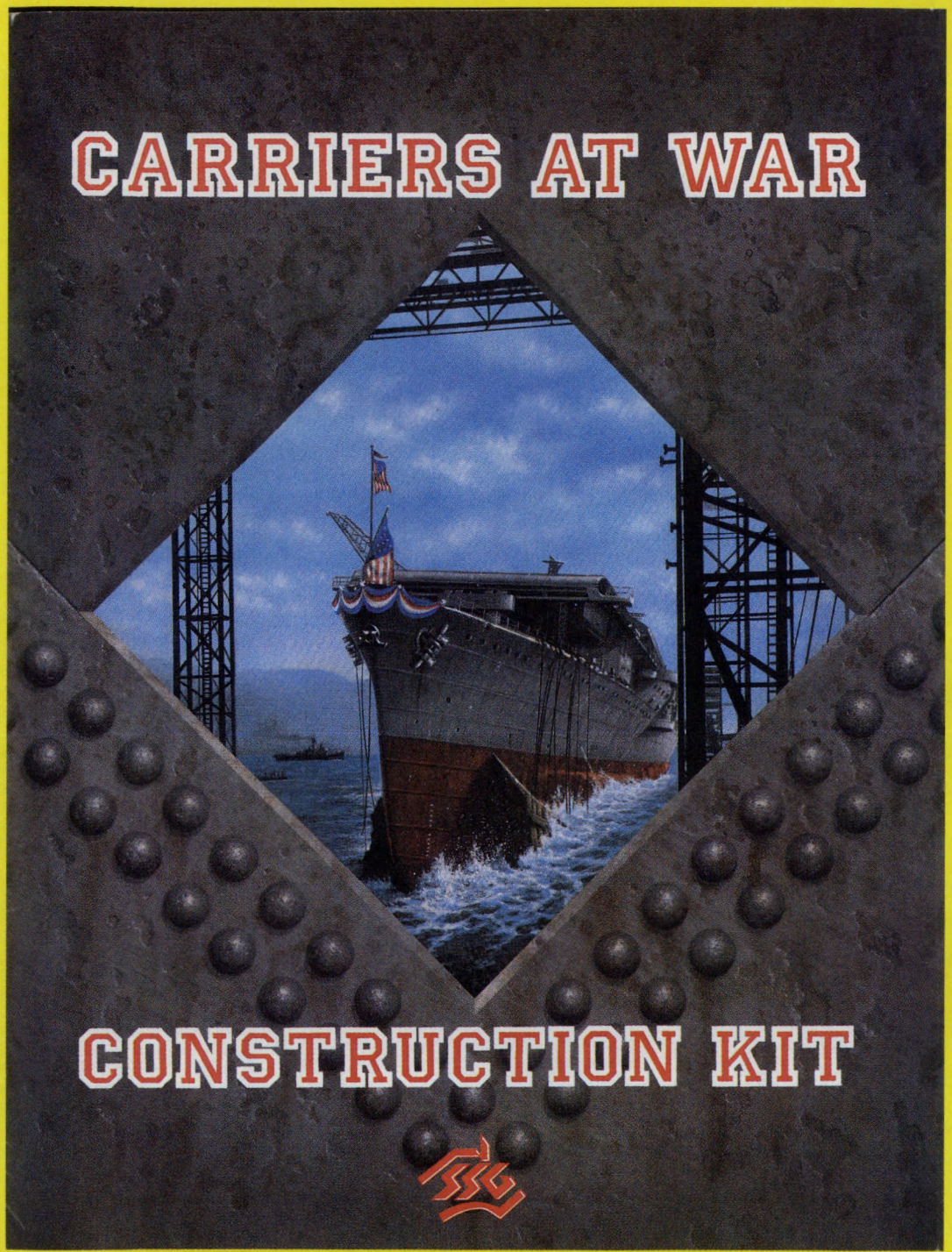

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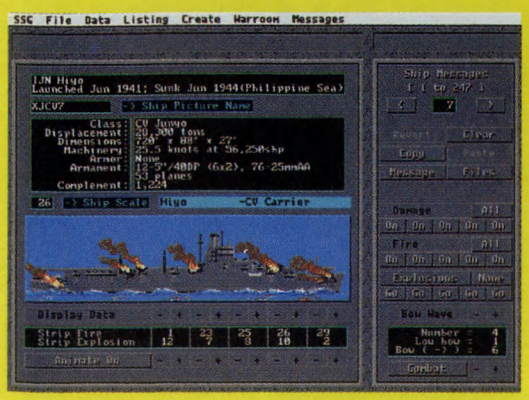

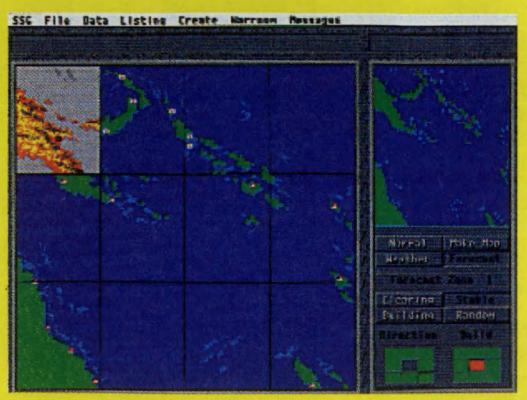

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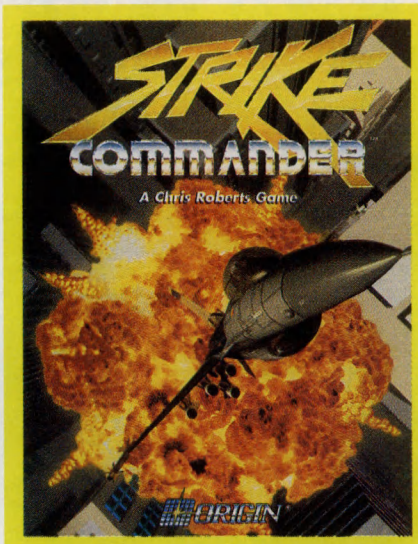

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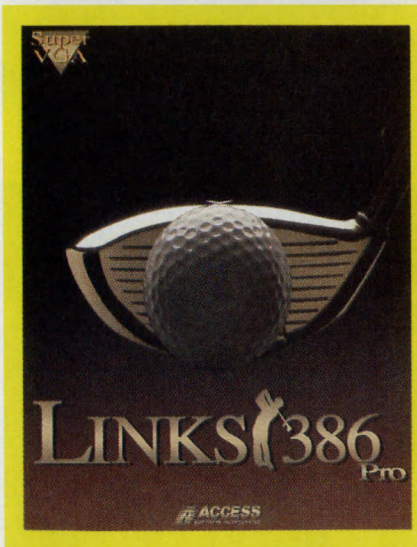

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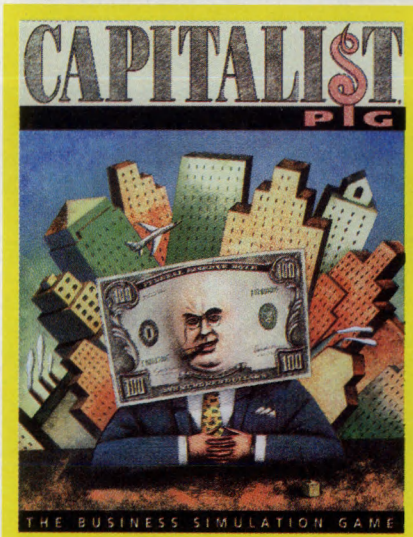

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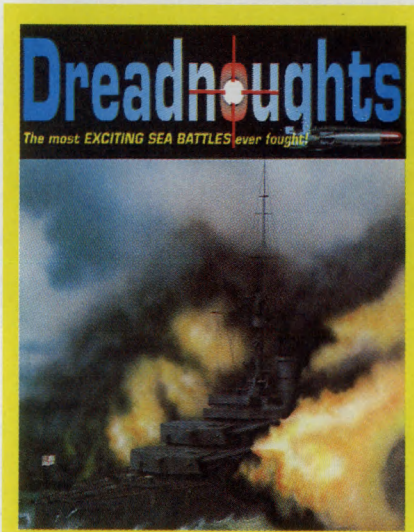

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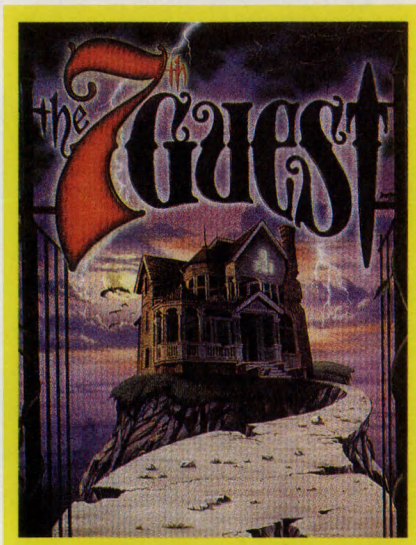

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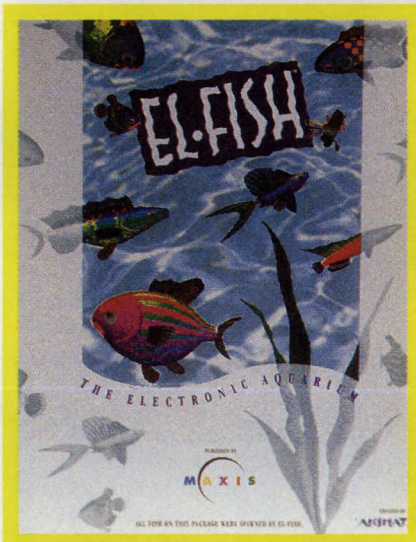

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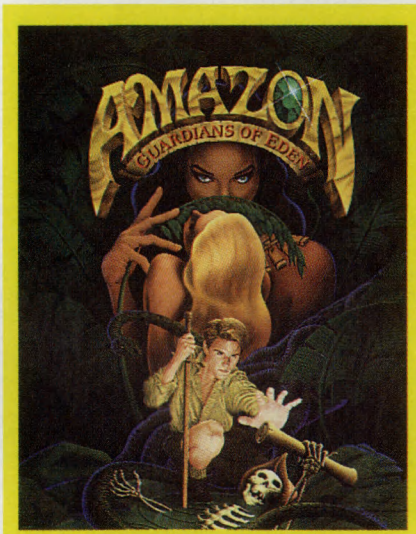

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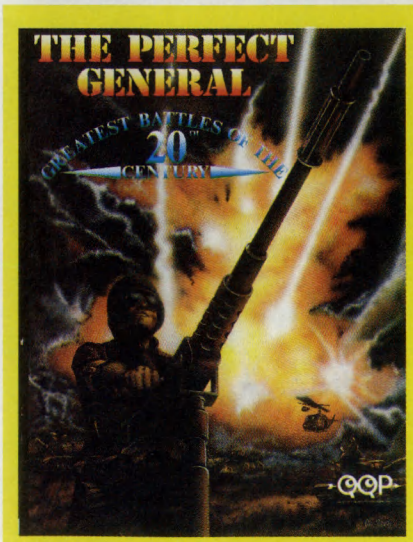

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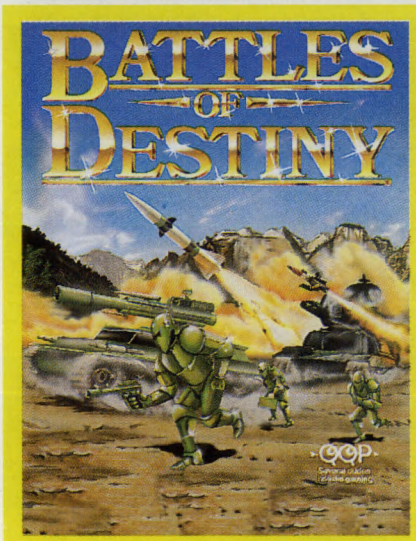

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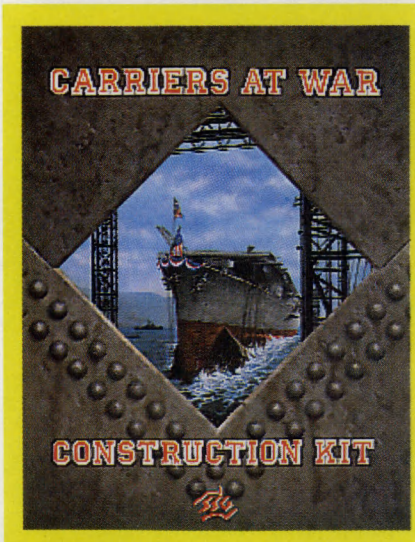

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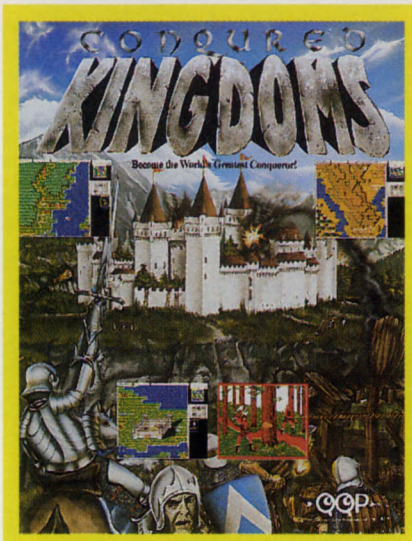

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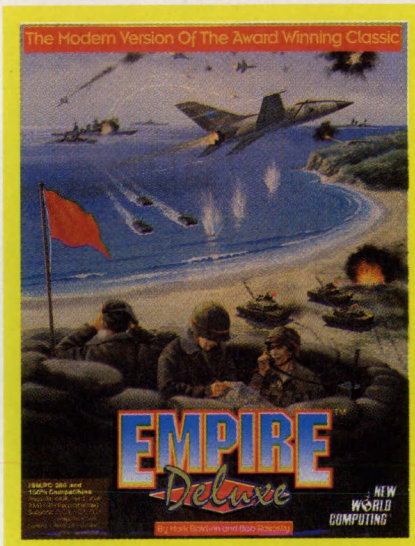

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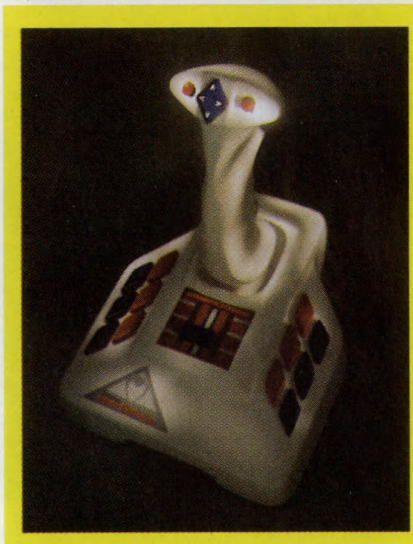

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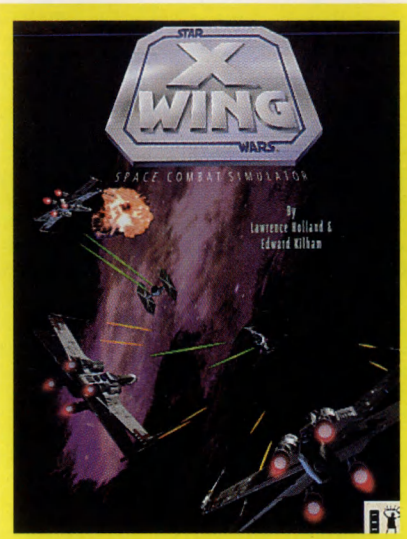

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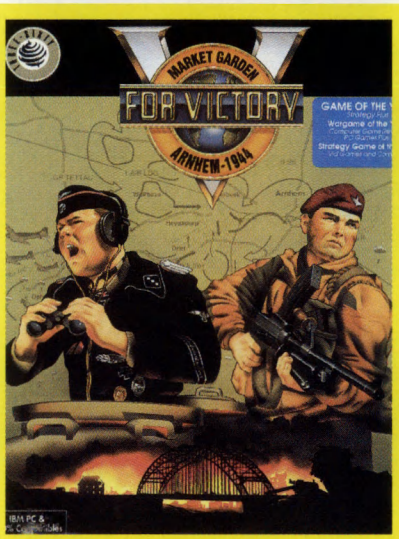

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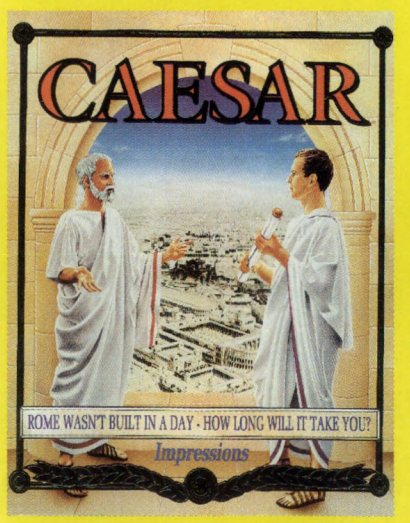

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